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ABSTRACT

A study explored the impact on students on participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LVNYC). Change in three major areas was examined: literacy skills; self-concept, attitudes, and beliefs related to literacy development; and involvement in literacy practices outside the program. The study was primarily qualitative but included a quantitative analysis of standardized test scores and writing samples. Data collection methods were focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observation. When questioned about their previous educational experience, students spoke of failure and the stress of entering the LVNYC program. Learning in groups was important, tutor turnover affected student progress, and students wanted more oral reading. Students felt that participation in LVNYC had an impact on literacy practices inside the program, because they felt they were learning, and that it affected their lives outside the program, because they used their literacy skills in private and public situations. The Student Leadership Program, which compliments the instructional program, consists of a student committee, student representation on the LVNYC board, and a student leadership team. Sincere efforts are made by this program to help students develop a more proactive stance in relation to their own schooling; nevertheless, students appear to remain dependent on the paid staff. Student skill development is supported by narratives, interviews, and writing samples analysis and to a lesser degree by standardized reading test score analysis. Recommendations are made regarding provision and organization of services and ongoing assessment, evaluation, and program development. (Instruments, interview guidelines, and 56 references are appended.) (YLB)

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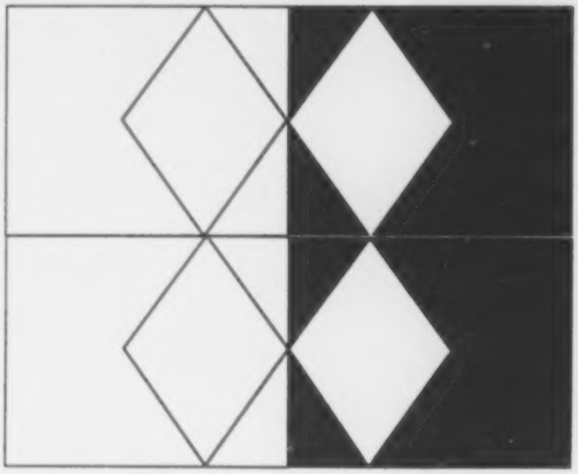

"THEY REALLY PUT A HURTIN' ON MY BRAIN":

LEARNING IN LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF NEW YORK CITY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Hanna Arlene Fingeret
Susan Tuck Danin

Literacy South
Raleigh, N.C.
January, 1991

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Literacy South, Durham, N.C.

January, 1991

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PREFACE

This is a study of a rich, interactive world of adults, their families and friends, and the volunteers and staff who are helping them develop their literacy skills. We find that Literacy Volunteers of New York City is an effective program that is in the forefront of literacy education in its ability to help students move from a text-based to a knowledge-based approach to reading; its extensive use of writing for instruction and personal reflection; its commitment to student leadership development; and its use of group instruction. Literacy Volunteers of New York City's instructional program is a dynamic response to the needs and interests of adults with very low literacy skills. Students work together in small groups with one or two tutors, helping each other learn to read and write as they slowly peel off layers of negative feelings about themselves and their potential.

Methods used to evaluate any program are determined by the stated goals of the program, the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the audience(s) for the evaluation. Literacy Volunteers of New York City identifies itself as committed to student-centered learning which will enhance students' literacy skills as well as have an impact on their self-esteem. Overall, the program hopes to help students create a better quality of life for themselves and their families. Reflecting the program's central concern with students' change, the evaluation of LVNYC sought to answer the main question, "What is the impact for students of their participation in LVNYC?" by examining three major areas: (a) changes in students' literacy skills, (b) changes in attitudes and self-concept related to literacy development, and (c) changes in involvement in literacy tasks outside the program.

This study was concerned with assessing the outcomes of participation, but we wanted to understand the process through which those impacts develop as well. This meant that we had to use research methods that would allow us to immerse ourselves in the students' world so that change could be viewed as a dynamic process rather than simply as a list of behaviors. In addition, evaluation approaches must be consistent with the program's philosophy and approach to instruction. Only then do we have some assurance that we are assessing that which the program is attempting to develop. In the case of LVNYC, this meant that evaluation methods must incorporate flexibility and responsiveness.

Therefore, this evaluation is primarily qualitative. Qualitative methods provide a holistic view and reveal the program in as naturalistic a way as possible. The evaluator discovers the meaning and impact of the program through the perspectives of the participants; analysis is inductive rather than deductive, and is concerned with process as well as outcomes. We used open-ended focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observation as the main data collection methods. Additional data included program documents and students' demographic information, standardized test scores, and writing samples. All evaluation research must meet certain criteria for rigorous and systematic investigation in order to be useful. This study, by design, meets those criteria established by the research community for credible and trustworthy research.

Conclusions

"Yes, I am learning," was the overwhelming conclusion of the large majority of students with whom we spoke and, as we listened to students' stories, a mosaic of consequences of program participation emerged. Improvement in literacy skills is the foundation that supports numerous impacts on life inside and outside the program. As we talked with students about their participation in LVNYC and what impact it has had on their lives, we were confronted with an impressive array of narratives of change and limits to change. It became clear through students' experiences that impact is situational.

Students experience positive change in attitudes and beliefs in a number of areas. They see literate persons in a more realistic light; their willingness to take risks with new literacy practices is increased; their enjoyment of literacy is greatly enhanced; and their attitudes about literacy, teaching and learning have become more oriented to the role of prior knowledge and experience. Students do not seem to be placing literacy in a larger sociopolitical perspective, however; their attitudes and beliefs remain oriented to fitting into the mainstream society and to individual social mobility.

There are extensive changes in students' participation in literacy practices in their lives outside the program; since practices are social, these shifts imply changes in relationships as well as new tasks being accomplished. The most extensive changes are to public literacy practices in private situations outside the program, and in private literacy practices in private situations inside the program. All of the students with whom we spoke describe some changes; the movement stops or is severely slowed at the point that the situation changes from being inside the program to outside the program, or from private to public. For example, students may feel comfortable using new skills and learning when they are in their tutoring groups. When a visitor comes to the group, it is transformed, for some students, from a private to a public situation. Stress and fear increase, interfering with these students' learning and performance. Similarly, students may confidently fill out application forms in their small groups but have terrible difficulty when facing a prospective employer; the situation moves from inside to outside which changes the practice even through the specific task (filling in the application) remains constant.

When students do not use their skills, or do not feel that they have access to their skills (i.e., performance anxiety), this reflects the power of shame. Students remain terrified of the negative judgment of others. Even when students discuss important and concrete positive changes in their skills, their self-concept, their self-esteem, and their practices, they regularly accompany that by saying that they still have not told many of their friends, family members, employers and coworkers about their skills limitations and their participation in LVNYC. The challenge for literacy programs is to help students move across these boundaries, taking their skills into public situations outside the program.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City has made a sincere commitment to student leadership development to complement the instructional program, but needs to clarify what leadership development means. Often, the structures are in place without the processes and mechanisms to support them; the Student Committee exists, for example, but the range of its functions and the rules for its operation are not defined. As a result, students receive mixed messages about their rights, authority, and power which can lead to a variety of problems. It interferes with creating the kind of safe, predictable and responsive situation in which students can transform their terror and shame.

The two measurement tools, standardized tests and writing samples, seem to indicate that students are learning, that they are developing in writing more than in reading, but that there is not a linear relationship between how much they are learning (as measured by these instruments) and how much time they spend in the program. Students appear to continue to learn over time, but the rate of learning slows for students who have been in the program more than two years. In addition, students feel that learning slows when tutors and groups change; sometimes it resumes, but not always. Students are concerned with being able to function in social situations in new ways; the subskills and tasks measured by the standardized tests do not indicate the extent to which students are able to change their literacy practices in their lives. Indeed, we know of no published test that is able to measure progress in the development of literacy practices.

Recommendations

1. Students consistently mention the negative effects of tutor turnover; efforts should be made to a) develop an understanding of why tutors leave; b) establish systems for tutor support that will decrease attrition and enhance the effectiveness of instruction; c) help students deal with tutor turnover. We also recommend that LVNYC develops a system for regular in-service tutor development that will support their skill development and, we hope, reinforce their commitment and their staying power as well.

2. We recommend that LVNYC re-examine the decision to terminate instruction at a point when students are in transition from a text-based to a knowledge-based model of reading. In the language presently used in the program, this translates into exploring moving from a limit of sixth grade level reading ability to seventh or eighth.

3. We recommend that additional steps be taken to increase the cultural diversity of staff and volunteers. In addition, we recommend that education in cross-cultural communication be included as part of tutor training as soon as possible.

4. We recommend that LVNYC develop a plan for providing counseling services to students in a variety of formats.

5. In addition, we recommend that LVNYC staff and tutors work with students to develop ways that the program can support students' use of their skills in situations that are increasingly public and outside the program.

6. LVNYC is committed to leadership development, but must involve the students, staff, tutors and board in deciding what is a legitimate role for students and planning to act on that decision.

7. We recommend that the program engage in a process to develop an internal evaluation and assessment system.

We hope that this report conveys the excitement and commitment of all of the students, staff, volunteers and board members of Literacy Volunteers of New York City who participated in this project. We asked what is the impact for students who participate in LVNYC? The students tell us in this report that the impact is positive and profound, touching every aspect of their lives.

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CHAPTER 1. THE CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of a rich, interactive world of adults, their families and friends, and the volunteers and staff who are helping them develop their literacy skills. It provides a window into one aspect of the learners' lives as they struggle, alone and together, with the challenges, joys, and agonies of change. These literacy students made a commitment to teach us about their lives and the impact of participating in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, and we made a commitment to listen, to try to learn, and to work together with them to bring their voices to this report.

Most of the fieldwork for this study was conducted over seven months in 1990. The major question addressed in this study is, "What is the impact of participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, for students?" We examined change in three major areas: 1) literacy skills; 2) self-concept, attitudes and beliefs related to literacy development; and 3) involvement in literacy practices outside the program. This study is primarily qualitative, although it includes a quantitative analysis of standardized test scores and writing samples.

This report is divided into three major sections. The first section provides a framework for understanding and interpreting the research findings. This includes a chapter on literacy and a general description of the program, and a chapter describing our research design and the qualitative research methods.

In the second section we present our data and findings. One of the strengths of qualitative research is that findings are placed in context; for this report, that means the contexts of students' lives inside and outside the program. In order to understand the findings presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven fully, we need information about students' backgrounds and about how the program operates. Therefore, in Chapter Three we introduce the students, sharing their educational backgrounds, how they came to LVNYC and their goals; Chapter Four provides a description of the program. With that foundation laid, we examine the impact of participation on skills development inside the program in Chapter Five, and in Chapter Six we look at how participation influences students' lives outside. The Student Leadership Program is examined in Chapter Seven. And the quantitative methods and analysis of standardized test scores and writing samples is presented in Chapter Eight. The third section moves on to overall conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Nine.

LITERACY

> Experience teaches us not to assume that the obvious is clearly understood. So it is with the truism with which we begin: All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies -- sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly -- an interpretation of [humanity] and the world. It could not be otherwise.... The critical analyst will discover, in the methods and texts used by educators and students, practical value options that betray a philosophy.., well or poorly outlined, coherent or incoherent. (Freire, 1985, pp. 43-44)

Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LVNYC) is a unique program, reflecting the shared struggles of untold thousands of students, staff and volunteers over its seventeen year history. Nonetheless, it also has characteristics in common with other literacy programs, and with particular schools of thought about literacy. It is important for us to be able to place LVNYC in relation to these practices and theories as we try to understand the meanings of the students' stories that we hear in subsequent chapters. Therefore, we begin with a framework for thinking about literacy and the purposes of literacy programs.

Philosophical thought about literacy and literacy education in the United States is developed within the larger context of American ideals of individualism and independence; this is reflected in American education's commitment to individual differences (Pratt, 1990). Pratt explains that in the United States, "Individuals are believed capable of standing apart from society in the privacy of their inner self to reflect on their beliefs and actions, to critically evaluate them, and to make choices based on that review. This individual autonomy is assumed to exist both as a capacity of the person to be nurtured and as a societal ideal to be promoted" (p. 36). This leads to a "pursuit of autonomy and independence as manifestations of self-development" (p. 39) that can be seen clearly in the way in which illiteracy is framed as a problem of dependence today. It also is seen in the discussions in subsequent chapters about issues such as silent and oral reading.

From comparative social science we know that this must be understood as the *American* dominant culture; it is not universal. For example, Pratt compares American and traditional Chinese culture. He finds that in America,

> the self is perceived as subject, the center of existence and meaning and, therefore, is searched for apart from the relationships that may have initially given it meaning, and with extended family moved to the periphery in search of self. Such a perspective on self not only obscures the influence of historical, cultural, social, and political factors but stands in sharp contrast to Chinese traditions and conceptions of self, particularly those that still hold to Confucian notions of self as the center of relationships and with the individual perceived as object more than subject, created more than existing, and in relation with, rather than apart from, others. (p. 40)

This conception of the nature of personhood and the self lies at the heart of our notions of literacy.

There are several competing conceptions of literacy today (this framework is drawn from Lytle and Wolfe, 1989). We are most familiar with what many call the "**literacy as skills**" perspective, since it permeates our public schools. In this view, literacy is seen as a composite of "decontextualized skills regarded as stable across texts and contexts" (Lytle and Wolfe, 1989, p. 7). This is compatible with what Street (1984) calls the "autonomous model," referring to the idea that literacy exists separately from any specific situation or ideology. This conception of literacy leads to focusing on simple encoding and decoding skills. Similar to this is a notion of "**literacy as tasks**" (Lytle and Wolfe, 1989), in which literacy is viewed as the ability to independently and successfully accomplish specific tasks such as filling in forms, pulling information from newspaper ads, or addressing an envelope. There is some sense of context here, since these tasks are socially constructed, but there remains the assumption that successful accomplishment of these tasks is stable across situations and requires only individual skill achievement.

Literacy also can be understood as social and cultural "**practices;**" adults engage in a range of activities for different purposes and in different situations (see Scribner and Cole, 1981). Practices imply a relationship between the persons, the situation, and the resources available. This is consistent with Street's "ideological model;" it is understood that practices vary from cultural group to cultural group. As Lytle and Wolfe explain: "to understand the social meanings of literacy, researchers working in an ethnographic or anthropological tradition have studied what language means to its users and how it is used by them. Studies of the functions and uses of literacy in different cultural contexts reveal distinctions among literacy practices of different cultures and communities" (p. 104). In this view, tasks are placed in specific situations and are changed accordingly. For example, writing a letter to one's child in another city with the help of a close friend differs from writing a letter to city hall as part of a group of irate tenants.

Finally, there is the perspective of "**literacy as critical reflection and action**" in which literacy is seen as a means for adults to challenge the conventional wisdom, the myths and assumptions underlying their beliefs and perceptions, for the purpose of changing their relationship to the social structures. In this perspective, literacy is, "a process of interpreting the world and developing a consciousness of commonly held values, behaviors, and beliefs as socially and culturally constructed" (Lytle and Wolfe, p. 10). The work of critical theorists such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux is associated with this view of literacy. This perspective challenges mainstream notions of how, where and by whom knowledge is created; it is a philosophy in which action and reflection are intertwined as adults work together for a more just society.

Literacy programs define their purposes in relation to their definition of literacy. At one end of a continuum are programs that are oriented to individual achievement and social mobility; these programs often talk about "mainstreaming" new readers. These programs may maintain much of the traditional hierarchical notions of education, with teachers and students acting in fairly rigid, predefined roles as the givers and receivers of knowledge. Individually-oriented programs often subscribe to the skills definition of literacy, using commercial workbooks and a phonics-based instructional approach. They may also incorporate students' experiences and language skills, however, reflecting a model of literacy as tasks or practices as students and teachers work together to fashion instruction that is meaningful and effective.

Other programs are more community-oriented, working with adults in their communities to develop individual skills and even, in some cases, to work toward broader social change that requires collective action (Fingeret, 1984). Instruction in these programs emphasizes students' culture and the importance of context, so they will not subscribe to the skills view of literacy. However, instruction may look similar to what is found in individually-oriented programs that approach literacy as tasks or practices. The difference will be found in the extent to which community-oriented programs encourage critical reflection of the social structure and collective action. They assist students in placing their experiences in a broader political perspective which may lead to social action. For example, a group of literacy students may begin to research how their landlords manipulate the housing code, using a variety of information sources and practicing their reading and writing skills. Eventually they may petition the Housing Authority for changes in the code or in its monitoring, and may hold community meetings to which local policy makers are invited.

Of course, no program is an "ideal type" of any of these categories and definitions, and each creates a unique tapestry of responses to the characteristics of the situation and the persons involved. But as we examine the impact of participation for students in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, it is important to keep these dimensions in mind. Placing LVNYC in relation to the range of definitions of literacy and purposes of literacy programs will enable us to better understand the relationship between the program's characteristics and its impact on students' skills and lives.

THE PROGRAM

Literacy Volunteers of New York City is a private, nonprofit organization that provides adults with beginning level literacy instruction. Founded in 1973 as New York City's first volunteer literacy program, LVNYC serves adult learners through nine instructional programs at seven Centers and provides technical assistance through the Literacy Volunteers Outreach Training Program. Seven corporations in Manhattan provide locations for student orientation, tutoring, and/or tutor training. Two literacy programs are held in a church in Brooklyn and one in a neighborhood restaurant in Harlem (See Appendix A for a listing of programs, their locations, and scheduled meeting times). Funding comes from a variety of private and public sources.

During the 1989-90 fiscal year, LVNYC reported serving over 883 students in their literacy program, of whom 461 attended 12 or more hours. The outreach training program, which assists organizations who wish to establish or improve literacy programs, served 2, 436 students through those organizations. LVNYC is supported by a volunteer staff of 344, (278 as tutors) and a paid staff of 35 (23 are full-time) (LVNYC Final Report, 1990).

Program Description

LVNYC describes itself as a "partnership of students, volunteers, and professional staff members who are firmly committed to student-centered learning." Students identify their own learning goals and choose reading materials and write on topics which reflect their interests and goals. Volunteer tutors support learners in their endeavors by leading group discussions, introducing reading and writing skills, helping to locate appropriate reading materials, and monitoring students' progress toward their goals.

A second feature is small group instruction with one or two tutors. This format was introduced in 1984 in a pilot program to maximize student interaction and cooperative learning by grouping four to nine students with different skill levels and program experience together. Each member contributes to group discussions about what he or she is reading and writing and groups have the freedom to pursue topics of interest that are raised during discussions. At the time of this evaluation , all groups meet on the average of two times a week for 90 minute sessions, except for one site where groups meet three times a week for two hours each time. Each site is called a Center and is administered by a paid staff person, the Center Director, and a paid Center Assistant.

In addition to tutoring sessions in reading and writing, students can participate in a variety of other instructional activities and events. Some Centers have tutoring available in math and drivers education, as well as Bible study groups and student service groups which help with tasks such as banking and filling out tax forms. Because New York City offers so many rich opportunities for learning, Centers also may sponsor trips to museums, libraries, theaters, movies, art galleries, special events, and lectures.

Each Center holds "celebrations" of students' reading and writing. During these events, which take place at the Centers, students read and respond to each others' writing. Students are also invited to read their writing at an annual program-wide writing celebration which recognizes and awards outstanding writers from all the Centers. Center newsletters and LVNYC publications provide other avenues of expression for student writing and generate reading material for students.

LVNYC is in the vanguard of adult literacy programs in developing an advocacy program which strives to integrate students into all levels of the organization. The Student Leadership Program was established in 1985 and consists of the Student Committee, which is made up of two elected representatives from each of the nine instructional programs; a student who attends board meetings; and two former students who form the Student Leadership Team in the central office. The Student Leadership Team presents programs on topics such as AIDS, Black History, and racism at the Centers. Students also participate in orienting new students, training volunteers, and media presentations about the program.

Students' progress in the literacy program has traditionally been evaluated by the administration of standardized reading tests . The Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE -- Reading subtest), or the Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP) are administered to students during the Pre-enrollment Program (PEP) and thereafter at 50 hour intervals. On a more informal basis, tutors meet with students to review and discuss progress toward student-identified goals.

Students

LVNYC actively recruits students through radio and television advertising and posters. Adults who are interested in becoming students call and are scheduled for a Pre-enrollment Program, which is held every 3 weeks at one of the corporate locations. During PEP, prospective students participate in an eight-hour orientation over three sessions: (1) Intake interview, introduction to the program, and schedule for testing; (2) Testing; and (3) Demonstration lesson in writing and assignment to a Center. During PEP, adults whose skills test above the sixth grade level, who are not proficient in spoken English, or who express interest in another type of program are referred to other programs; 53% of the students who left the program without meeting their goals in 1989-90 either didn't return after PEP or left after attending a Center less than 11 hours. Students who are served within the program tend to be, on the average, Black (70%), between the ages of 25 and 44 (57%), and employed either full or part time (65%). Seventy-seven percent of the students enter the program testing below the third grade level.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of the program and perform a wide range of tasks within the organization. In addition to tutoring, volunteers also are involved in intake counseling, testing, coordinating resources, publishing, assisting with computers, recording books, library management and general office work. All volunteers must commit to a minimum of six months.

Literacy tutors attend a ten-week training program which extends over a three month period. There are six such training sessions a year. During the first phase of training the participants attend six three-hour workshops on how to teach adult learners reading and writing skills and how to lead discussion groups. The second phase is a month-long apprenticeship during which volunteers spend two nights a week at their respective Centers working with experienced tutors. Volunteers are then assigned to a group near the end of their apprenticeships. The third phase of training is comprised of three follow-up workshops on more specific instructional skills, such as spelling and editing. The workshops are held one night a week, allowing volunteers to continue with their groups one night a week and to bring their tutoring experiences to the training.

LVNYC faces the challenge of recruiting a more culturally diverse pool of volunteers. The 1989-90 report states that most of the tutors are white (84%) and predominantly female (81%).

The Organization

Such a large instructional program requires a paid staff specialized to handle the various aspects of its management and administration, such as student recruitment and orientation; training, supervising and supporting volunteers; developing educational policy; publishing; and directing the seven literacy Centers with their nine instructional programs. The central office of LVNYC houses a staff that includes an executive director and four directors, three associate directors, two coordinators, two student advocates, the outreach trainer, and various office personnel. Seven Center Directors and their assistants operate primarily out of the Center sites.

In addition to the instructional program, Literacy Volunteers of New York City maintains an active publishing program which develops and distributes paperback books for new readers that include writings from LVNYC students as well as unedited excerpts from other published work. There also is an active development office responsible for fund raising. The organization is governed by a 25-member Board of Directors that includes a Program Committee that supports the instructional program. Other committees focus on activities such as fund raising and publishing.

A Program in Transition

Like any other evaluation, we can only capture a moment in time. The instructional program at Literacy Volunteers of New York City is dynamic; as we worked with the staff, tutors and students, they were busy developing a new student assessment process, refining the relationship between Center Directors and the central office staff, and renegotiating class schedules -- among other things! All of our descriptions of the program, its activities and the actors are understood to reflect our experience of the program at the time of the study.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Methods used to evaluate any program are determined by the stated goals of the program, the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the audience(s) for the evaluation. In a recent review of program evaluations in adult literacy, Lytle and Wolfe (1989) describe a variety of evaluation methods, including program surveys/questionnaires, self-study instruments, statistical analysis of standardized measures, interviews, observations, and document review. They suggest that "evaluation designs need to be true to the nature of the programs for which they have been developed" (p.19).

Literacy Volunteers of New York City identifies itself as committed to student-centered learning which will enhance students' literacy skills as well as have an impact on their self-esteem. Overall, the program hopes to help students create a higher quality of life for themselves and their families. It attempts to reach these goals primarily through literacy instruction, student services and the Student Leadership Program. Reflecting the program's central concern with students' change, the evaluation of LVNYC sought to answer the main question, "What is the impact for students of their participation in LVNYC?" by examining three major areas: (a) changes in students' literacy skills (reading, writing, computation, critical thinking), (b) changes in self-concept related to literacy development, and (c) changes in involvement in literacy tasks in all the domains of the students' lives: work, family, and community. The purposes, design and qualitative methodology of this evaluation of LVNYC are described in this chapter.

PURPOSES

LVNYC was evaluated in 1981-82, 1983-84, and 1985-86. With the exception of on-site observations and tutor and student questionnaires during the second study, the major method of evaluation has been to examine gains in students' standardized test scores over the length of time spent in the program. These evaluations consistently reported that the greatest gains in test scores were seen within the first fifty hours of participation. Thereafter, gains in reading scores appeared to plateau. These evaluations were based on very small sample sizes, however, raising questions about the appropriateness of generalizing from such a small sample.

This present evaluation was designed for two broad purposes: (a) to answer questions about program impacts on students, and (b) to design a system for ongoing program self-evaluation. A third purpose, to a much lesser degree, was to determine if LVNYC could qualify as a National Diffusion Network program.

The main research question is: **What is the impact, for students, of their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City?** This was examined in terms of 1) changes in literacy skills; 2) changes in involvement in literacy practices in students' lives; and 3) changes in self-concept related to literacy development. Since the main emphasis was program impact on *students*, we chose to look at the volunteers and the larger organization primarily in terms of the students' experiences.

In keeping with the need to access multiple perspectives at multiple sites and to gather data which would help us connect students' experiences with program impacts, the study was primarily qualitative. Qualitative methods provide a holistic view and reveal the program in as naturalistic a way as possible. The evaluator imposes no preconceived ideas of success or outcomes, but *discovers* the meaning and impact of the program through the perspectives of the participants. This is not to say that the evaluation is "value-free" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), but that analysis is inductive rather than deductive. Qualitative research is descriptive and is concerned with process as well as outcome (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1980).

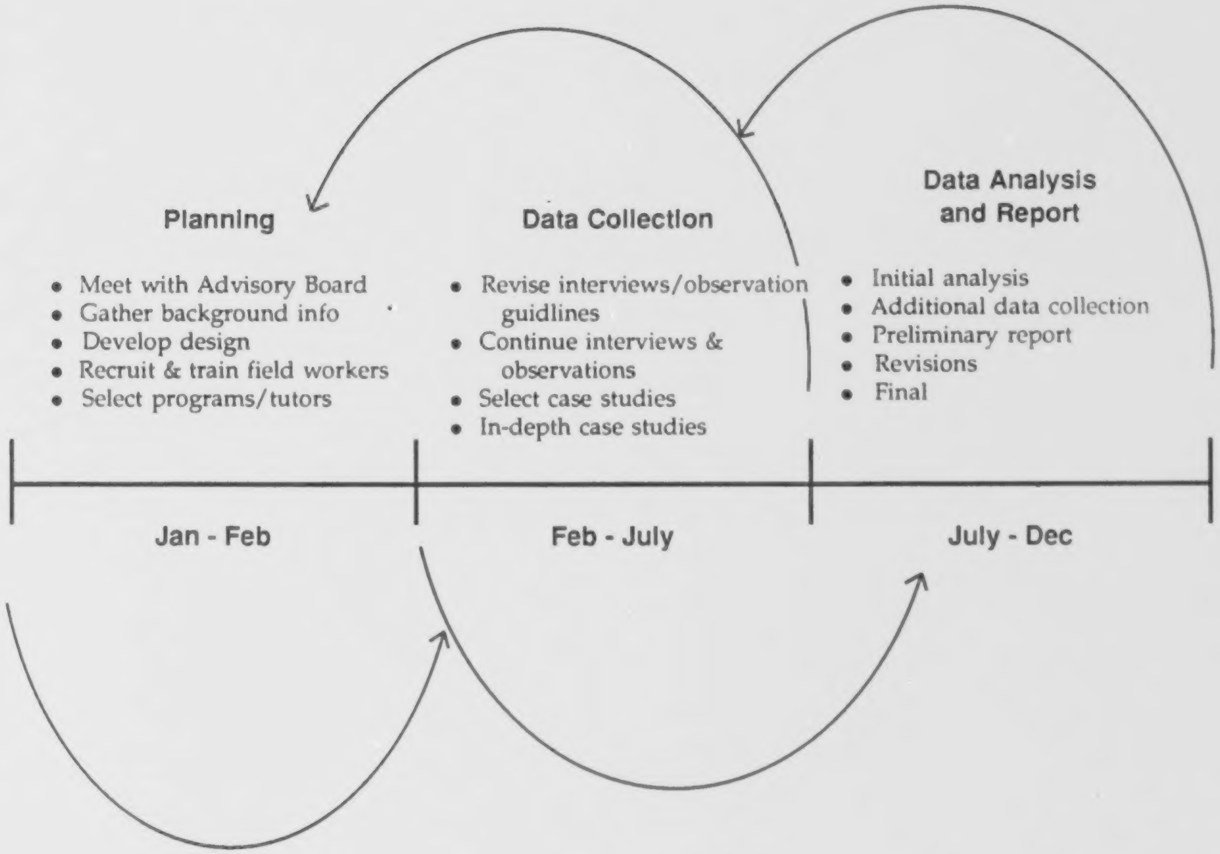
All evaluation research must meet certain criteria for rigorous and systematic investigation in order to be useful. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define issues of "trustworthiness" that support evaluation findings as worthy of being taken into account. Qualitative inquiry must meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility of findings and interpretations can most likely be insured by prolonged engagement on-site, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. The remaining criteria depend, to a large extent, on establishing credibility. The evaluation, by design, met these criteria.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation project was completed in three phases: (a) planning, (b) data collection, and (c) analysis and final report (See Figure 1). The arrows in Figure 1 indicate that the process is recursive, although the time line appears linear. During the planning phase, the Principal Investigator met with the staff, Executive Director, program committee of the board, and Student Advocates (former students on staff in the central office who form the Student Leadership Team) to identify the evaluation questions and goals. An evaluation Advisory Committee was established to work with the evaluators to provide input on the evaluation process and to serve as a check on credibility. The Advisory Committee consisted of three staff members, two students, one tutor, and two board members. The field research team consisted of the Principal Investigator, Project Director, and three on-site fieldworkers. The Principal Investigator and/or Project Director met with the evaluation Advisory Committee during each of the three phases and consulted with individual

Figure 1

Phases of the Evaluation With Timeline


Planning
Meet with Advisory Board
Gather background info
Develop design
Recruit & train field workers
Select programs/tutors
Data Collection
Revise interviews/observation guidlines
Continue interviews & observations
Select case studies
In-depth case studies
Data Analysis and Report
Initial analysis
Additional data collection
Preliminary report
Revisions
Final
Jan - Feb
Feb - July
July - Dec

committee members as needed during the project. They also met with the Executive Director and/or with the Director of Education about once a month during data collection and preliminary analysis to insure open communication. In a qualitative evaluation, communication with the Advisory Committee and among the team is an integral part of the process. These are examples of peer debriefing and member checking, necessary to establish credibility.

Data Collection

We used open-ended focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observation as the main data collection methods. Additional data included students' demographic information, standardized test scores, and writing samples. All program documents were made available to us, including the tutor training manual, student advocate guidelines, past internal and external evaluations, data forms, and minutes of the Student Committee meetings. We also collected samples of the various newsletters produced by each of the Centers and LVNYC publications.

Focus group interviews were conducted with one instructional group from each of the nine instructional programs, located in seven Centers. Focus group interviews are conducted because they allow the participants to interact and respond to each other around a specified topic, experience in the literacy program in this case, and provide greater understanding as to why certain views are held (Krueger, 1988). The nine groups were selected from a pool of eighteen who volunteered to participate after hearing a description of the study. All participants were assured of confidentiality.

Every effort was made to select a representative sample, based on the student demographics of the program as a whole (see Appendix B for Summary of Characteristics of Students who Participated in Study). Under the category of race/ethnicity, we delineated according to ethnicity or country of origin, e.g., African American students and students from the various Caribbean Islands and Guyana. LVNYC, for reporting purposes, classifies all of these students according to race. LVNYC does not distinguish within the category, Hispanic, for country of origin; we did not distinguish either. In addition, LVNYC does not collect information about students' native language or languages used in students' homes; all students are expected to be proficient in spoken English but not to have well-developed literacy skills in any language. We did not collect data about native languages or languages used in students' homes either. We tried to make sure that we included students in our sample who had been in the program for varying periods of time, and those who had been working with groups that had been together for varying periods of time.

The Principal Investigator and Project Director conducted a pilot focus group interview to test the questions and made some additions based on students' responses. Two of the fieldworkers who had previous field research experience in educational settings accompanied either the Principal Investigator or the Project Director on an interview and observation, to assure reliability in data collection. These fieldworkers were responsible for seven student focus group interviews and follow-up observations, the case studies interviews, and one tutor training observation. The third fieldworker conducted telephone interviews of students identified by the program as drop-outs and conducted the interview of the Student Committee together with the Project Director. The Project Director and/or Principal Investigator conducted the remainder of the personal interviews, focus groups, and observations.

The focus group interviews were conducted without the tutor(s) present. At a later date, the fieldworker observed the same group on site during an instructional session and conducted a debriefing interview with the tutor. All interviews were unstructured and focused on the general themes of students' goals, experiences in the program, and changes in literacy skills and practices inside and outside of the program. (See Appendix C for sample interview and observation guides). All interviews were audiorecorded and lasted from one and one-half to two hours.

Two additional student groups were interviewed at the request of the Advisory Committee. These groups differed from the intact instructional groups because they were composed of students from multiple groups at two of the larger centers. The assumption was that the intact groups would provide depth of experience while the heterogeneous groups would provide breadth of experience. There also was a concern that members of intact groups may have already negotiated their norms; some topics may be taboo in those settings that might get aired elsewhere. On the other hand, it was possible that intact groups would support their members in talking about painful or difficult topics that would otherwise not surface. Interestingly, the responses from the two types of groups were very similar and provided important evidence for credibility and dependability.

Individual student volunteers were selected from the nine intact groups to participate in case studies. The case studies afforded greater opportunity to explore the student's experience in a broader context and in greater depth. Nine of the students were interviewed outside of their Center and, in four of the cases, the fieldworker interviewed either a family member(s) or friend as well. A tenth case study was added because one student left the program before all the interviews were completed. (See Appendix D for case study interview guide and demographics). Case studies involved either two or three additional interviews of one and a half to two hours each. They also often included opportunities for the students to share their writing notebooks or folders with the fieldworker and to discuss their writing at length.

Focus group interviews also were conducted with the Student Committee, one Transition group, one group of graduates from the program, the Tutor Committee, and Center Directors (See Appendix E for the Tutor Committee and Center Director interview guides).

One of the factors that should be taken into account when interpreting this study is that only one member of the research team is a person of color and a male; he also is a student in another literacy program. His personal experience and communication style had a positive impact on the quality of data we were able to gather, particularly from students classified by the program as drop-outs. The other members of the team were white females.

We also collected data that would help us understand how tutors are being prepared and how students are being oriented to the program. We observed the following during the three phases of tutor training: (1) a group of volunteers during the session on how to instruct writing, (2) a subgroup of tutor apprentices while on-site working with students, and (3) the first whole group session after their on-site experience. We also observed during the last student Pre-enrollment Program (orientation) meeting. And we attended a program-wide event, an annual Celebration of students' writing.

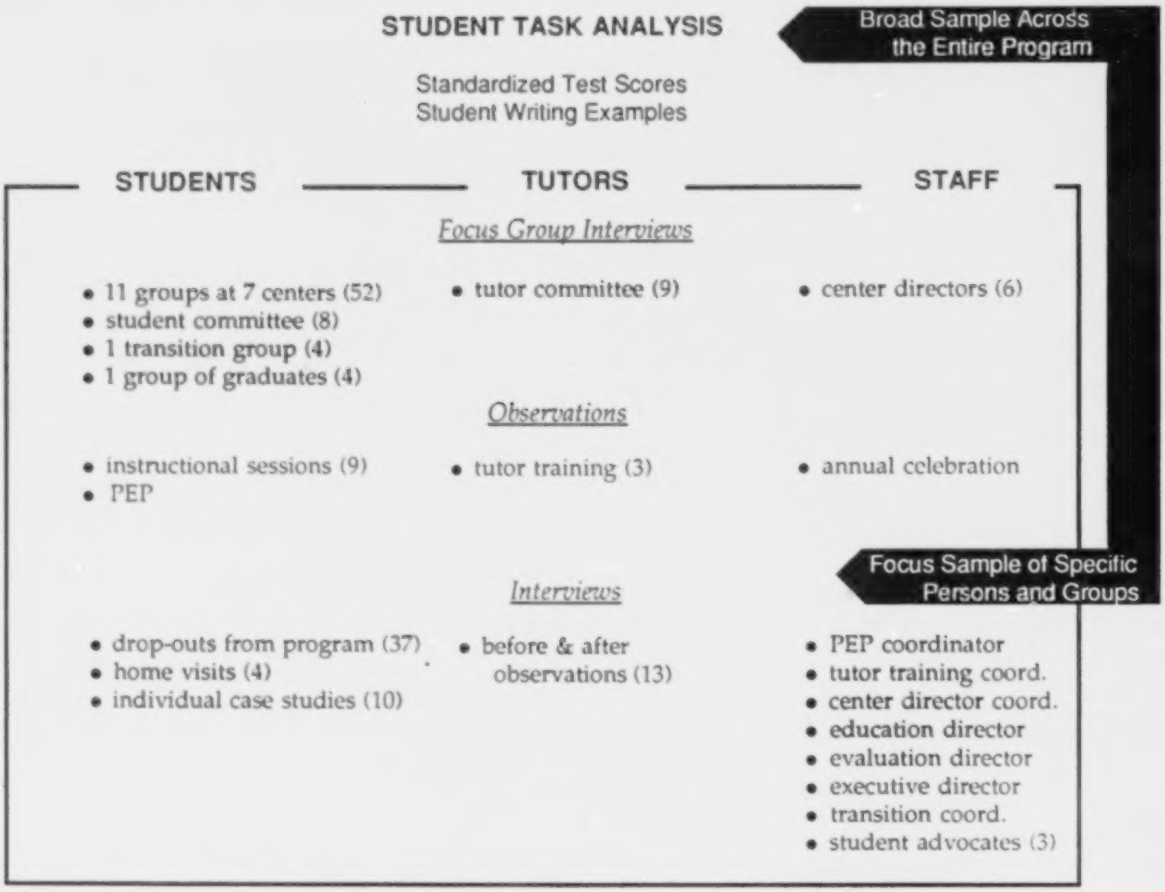
Finally, interviews were conducted with key staff members: three student advocates who are former LVNYC students, the coordinator for tutor training, the coordinator of the Pre-enrollment Program, the coordinator of center directors, the coordinator for the transition group, the Evaluation Director, the Education Director, and the Executive Director. Thus, we were able to triangulate data through multiple sources of information and multiple methods of data collection.

Group interviews and observations began in February and continued through July, 1990. Because the Principal Investigator and Project Director live in North Carolina, it was crucial to maintain constant contact with the on-site fieldworkers. We had weekly phone calls and meetings whenever the Project Director and/or Principal Investigator traveled to New York, which was once a month from January through July.

Students, volunteers and staff participated with enthusiasm throughout the data collection process. We were welcomed at all sites and students reported that they enjoyed talking with us. It is common to anticipate an initial awkwardness, but we found people were open and forthcoming. We tried to invite participation and to convey the inherent flexibility of this kind of responsive research, and our concern that they feel that their perspectives were understood and that their issues were being incorporated. The consistency of the stories across so varied a population and such wide-spread locales supports this belief (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Summary of Data Sources


STUDENT TASK ANALYSIS

Standardized Test Scores
Student Writing Examples

Broad Sample Across the Entire Program

STUDENTS	TUTORS	STAFF
	Focus Group Interviews	
• 11 groups at 7 centers (52) • student committee (8) • 1 transition group (4) • 1 group of graduates (4)	• tutor committee (9)	• center directors (6)
	Observations	
• instructional sessions (9) • PEP	• tutor training (3)	• annual celebration
	Interviews	
• drop-outs from program (37) • home visits (4) • individual case studies (10)	• before & after observations (13)	• PEP coordinator • tutor training coord. • center director coord. • education director • evaluation director • executive director • transition coord. • student advocates (3)

Focus Sample of Specific Persons and Groups

Interviews. We interviewed 102 students (65 in focus groups and 37 by telephone). Ten students, selected from the focus groups, were interviewed individually two or three more times, as case studies. Twenty tutors were interviewed (14 as part of the instructional group observations and an additional 6 in a focus group). Sixteen staff members were interviewed (2 Student Advocates, 7 Center Directors, 1 Center Assistant, and 6 central office staff).

Observations. Twenty observations were done at the Centers (two for each of the nine instructional groups and two for the additional groups) One observation was done during each of three phases of tutor training for a total of three observations. One observation was done during a pre-enrollment session and one observation was done during an annual program-wide event.

Student Task Data (Tests and Writing Samples) We also collected information that would be analyzed quantitatively, to complement the qualitative body of the study. These data included students' writing samples taken at different points in their participation in the program, and students' standardized test scores. We agreed to collect data that already were being generated in the program, since students were required to take standardized tests at 50-hour intervals and were writing on a regular basis. Detailed description of the methodology for collecting and analyzing these data is located in Chapter Eight with the analysis and findings, to facilitate understanding the quantitative research aspect of this study.

Data Management

We developed a data management system to deal with three different types of data: fieldnotes, interview transcripts and documents that would be inductively analyzed; standardized test scores that would be quantitatively analyzed; and writing samples for which we would develop an analysis scheme combining induction and quantitative analysis. In addition, we kept track of where we were at all times in the project -- which groups had been interviewed and observed, which interview tapes were finished with the initial transcription but not yet edited, and so on. Finally, we scheduled trips to New York as much as two or three months in advance to take advantage of better air fares; this meant that we had to be able to project data collection schedules pretty accurately. The study participants' flexibility and patience was essential.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in full onto computer files; the transcripts were corrected by the respective interviewers as they listened to the tapes while reading the transcripts. Observation notes were typed and entered into computer files. All files were identified by type of activity (group interview, case study, staff interview, observation), person(s) involved, location of activity, date, and fieldworker responsible. Data flow charts were developed to record and track the data collection, transcription, editing and correction process (see Appendix F). The equivalent of over 4,500 pages of data was recorded on computer files.

All available program documents were reviewed. Notes were taken and, where appropriate, information was incorporated into questions for interviews or background for observations and quantitative data collection. For example, the tutor training material was invaluable since only a third of the training process was observed and material from Student Committee minutes helped shape questions for interviews with staff and student representatives. Past evaluation reports guided decisions about what test score data to collect and what statistical operations to perform. Center and LVNYC newsletters and publications provided evidence of the value placed on student writing. Data management for the quantitative data is addressed in Chapter Eight.

Data Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately; procedures for quantitative data analysis are included in Chapter Eight. The findings in each domain were used to inform each other, to assist with interpretation and to contribute to the overall conclusions. We were not able to analyze for specific issues relating to gender, race, culture, native language or age within the scope of this study.

"Analysis is the process of bringing order to data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units" (Patton, 1980, p. 268). Analysis in the qualitative aspects of the evaluation began with the conceptualization of the questions during the planning phase and continued throughout. The formulation of the research questions revealed program staff's, board members', and evaluators' frameworks for what was meaningful and valued. Patton (1980) refers to this process as making theoretical predispositions explicit.

Data collection and analysis are iterative and recursive processes that occurred throughout the evaluation. As the fieldworkers completed interviews and observations and corrected transcripts they were asked to write up their impressions, and the entire evaluation team discussed what we were finding during our monthly meetings. Our meetings with the Advisory Committee provided further opportunities to discuss themes that we saw during interviews and observations. This ongoing analysis informed the continuing data collection. For example, observations at the program sites revealed a greater variety of activity than "just" reading and writing; we saw groups engaged in math tutoring, training for driver's education, and Bible study. This led to discussion with program staff and collection of additional documents and interview data.

As themes emerged from one group of participants' experience, we sought to better understand them through interaction with other participants or through documents. For example, we investigated whether student representatives' perspectives were confirmed by former students now on staff; we also explored themes from the group interviews in more depth during our case study interviews. We were able to compare, contrast, and triangulate data because we interviewed persons across all of the Centers and included different levels of perspectives (multiple sources), reviewed documents, and conducted observations (multiple methods) (Patton, 1980).

During the entire evaluation process we looked for possible theoretical frameworks by which to make sense of our data; this process of interacting with the literature is a third element of the data collection/analysis process. We explored areas such as identity formation, adult development, learning transfer, and organizational theory. Theories, in turn, led us back to the data to see if they contributed to a better understanding of the relationship between the program and changes for students.

Coding is a systematic process for "bringing order" to data by identifying and naming patterns and recurring themes. The coding process involved the Principal Investigator and Project Director who each began with three different focus group interviews and observations. We did an inductive analysis which meant that the categories or codes came from the data itself. Our categories reflected the *participants'* views, feelings, and words. We read through the files and made notes about what and how students talked about their participation in LVNYC. For example, students talked about how they came to the program, what their goals were, and changes they had seen in themselves. These topics became codes which were subsequently applied to other data and additions or changes made where necessary until the best match was found between the data and the categories. The Principal Investigator and Project Director then met to compare coding systems and made further modifications. We returned to the original evaluation questions to make sure we were focusing on relevant data. Our objective was to make sure that there was nothing inconsistent in our ways of analyzing the data; we expect to find differences in how we identify codes, but we must be looking at the same basic elements of the situation. Once we reached consensus in coding, we conducted a preliminary analysis of the data. The Principal Investigator reviewed a sample of data across the entire program and the Project Director did a more in-depth analysis on a smaller sample. We met again to discuss findings and organize our preliminary analysis according to the evaluation questions.

During the coding process we used a computer text analysis program specifically developed for this project (Elliot, 1990). This program did the mechanical work of sorting blocks of text to which we had assigned the same code number in transcripts and fieldnotes. The importance of microcomputers in the management of these data cannot be overemphasized. Quite simply, it would have been impossible to conduct an evaluation of this type and magnitude in one year without Elliot's program.

We organized the preliminary analysis according to the main question, "What is the impact for students of their participation in LVNYC?" along the three dimensions requested by LVNYC: (a) skill change "measured" (test scores, writing task analysis), (b) assessment of change in students' literacy behaviors inside and outside of the program, and (c) assessment of change in students' self-concept (feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs, leadership development, sense of empowerment). A fourth area included recommendations for an internal on-going system of program evaluation. We also identified general themes that could provide the basis for discussion with students, staff and the Advisory Committee and would help us understand the larger patterns of impact in the program.

The preliminary analysis was presented to three groups of people at LVNYC for their response and verification. At this stage we had not completed the writing task or test score analyses. We were interested in knowing if what we were finding "made sense" to the study participants; could they recognize their own experience? In September, we met with the Executive Director, Education Director, and a Student Advocate for almost four hours, with the evaluation Advisory Committee for almost three hours, and with the on-site fieldworkers for more than two hours. All of these meetings continued past their scheduled closure times as students, staff, fieldworkers, board members and the evaluation research team worked together to better understand the meaning of what we had seen and heard. We welcomed questions, comments, challenges, and disagreements. All sessions were audiorecorded. The practice of asking participants or stakeholders to review data, interpretations, and conclusions to see if they ring true to them is known as a member check (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); it is a widely used means for validation and verification, which are important for assuring the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Without exception, everyone confirmed the findings and preliminary interpretations. Each group felt the data were presented clearly, accurately, fairly, and were congruent with their experiences. The Executive Director and Education Director affirmed that the analysis was consistent with their knowledge and experience. The conversations helped us deepen our analysis and directed our attention to specific areas.

Upon confirmation that analysis was proceeding along the right track, we continued to read transcripts and fieldnotes and code the remaining data. The procedure we followed was to begin with student (in groups and individual case studies) information (interviews and observations), then tutors (interviews and observations during instructional sessions, tutor committee, and tutor training), and finally the staff interviews. We set up two interpretation sessions, began to outline the final report and make writing assignments. We developed a broad conceptual scheme for the concept of impact; we also explored the role of context in development (Rogoff, Gauvain, and Ellis, 1984) and literature on leadership development (Kahn, 1970, 1982; Heifetz, 19), as well as organizational theory (Weick, 1976). The data were re-examined for theoretical validation. We generated recommendations based on our analyses and interpretations.

The Executive Director and the Education Director responded to the first draft of this Final Report, checking for accuracy. In addition, we were concerned about our promises of confidentiality to some students whose characteristics might be recognizable in the report. We contacted those students and shared with them how their comments were included in the report. We worked with them to make sure they felt comfortable with the report; they also provided additional validation for our analysis.

CHAPTER 3. "GO FOR IT": SCHOOLING THEN AND NOW

INTRODUCTION

Students' perspectives on their educational backgrounds, the instructional program at LVNYC, and its impact on their lives are presented in the next five chapters. In this chapter, students talk about their previous experiences with public school and with other adult literacy programs. Then they discuss how they came to Literacy Volunteers of New York City and what their goals are. In the next chapter we look at the instructional program itself, since information about change has to be connected to an understanding of what students experience in the program. Both of these chapters are background information; they provide a context that helps us understand students' descriptions of impact in some complexity.

In Chapter 5 we present data on students' assessments of the impact of program participation on literacy practices inside the program, and in Chapter 6, students talk about how their participation in LVNYC affects their lives outside the program. Chapter 7 contains a discussion of the Student Leadership Program. Findings from the quantitative analysis of test scores and writing samples are included in Chapter 8. Data from students identified as drop-outs are incorporated with the data from other students as appropriate, although their reasons for leaving the program are analyzed specifically in Chapter 4.

We have tried to present students' stories as richly as possible, since their perspectives on the impact of participation must be understood in the context of their lives. Data from other sources, such as tutors or staff members, are presented to the extent that they help us better understand students' views. All of the names presented here have been changed to protect confidentiality; although students and staff are addressed by their first names in the program, we have chosen to use fictitious last names and a title (e.g., Mr., Ms.) in this report so that we don't give a false impression of familiarity and as a token of respect. When we felt it would not compromise someone's privacy we have introduced accurate information about gender, race and age to help us understand students' cultural backgrounds.

We present data from a wide range of participants, although it was not possible to include a quote from everybody who spoke with us during the work. When data are described as "supporting" or students as "agreeing" with each other, that is the result of the data analysis which took into account the context of the quote, the person speaking and the situation. It is the data that agree in our judgment, not the people; the data usually were generated in separate interviews. Sometimes, however, we choose to include a segment from a group interview in which the adults were interacting with each other. When this kind of face-to-face interaction is being depicted, it is explicitly identified.

Some persons' stories have been presented in detail to help us understand the meanings of their experiences, feelings and perspectives more fully. They tend to be the students who agreed to participate in case studies, allowing us deeper insight into their lives. These students represent a range of students' situations and characteristics:

- Mr. Paynter is a single, young African American man living with his family and working intermittently;
- Ms. Lopez is a married Puerto Rican woman in her early thirties with young children, a job that requires some literacy, and a rich family life;
- Mr. Guerrero is a 30-year old single Hispanic man living on his own, working in a job that does not require literacy, and active as a student representative;
- Ms. Leach is an African American woman in her twenties who lives with her adult brother and sister and is struggling to reach a point where she feels she can get a better job, one with benefits;
- Ms. Knowles is 65, African American, and retired -- which has given her a whole new sense of freedom; and

- Mr. Delisi is an Italian man in his late twenties, working steadily and living with his parents so that he can help them out while he's helping himself out as well.

"NOBODY READ MY STORIES": EARLY SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

Students' approaches to participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City are related to a number of factors, not the least of which is their prior experience with schooling. Some of the older adults never really went to school; they were needed at home to watch their siblings or work, and the value of schooling was viewed differently then. For example, Ms. Knowles, who is 65 years old, remembers that her father, "felt that we could get by without [schooling]. He had a little bit but he didn't have much. But [if] he could make it, then we could make it." And some students moved so often they never felt school had a chance.

Everyone describes their public school time with some pain. Ms. Sharpe, for example, a West Indian woman in her thirties, talks about getting promoted every year, "and you still don't know nothing. Your reading level is lousy. Your spelling is worse. And they take you and put you in the back of the class. You know what I mean. All who could learn in the front, and they take you and put you in the last seat in the back." When the class would read out loud Ms. Sharpe could not perform; she remembers that, "the whole class used to laugh at me, and all them teachers and them used to laugh at me. They also say, 'She always spoil the group.'" Mr. Delisi, an Italian man in his twenties, describes going to school with 65 children in one class. Ms. Alvarez, 23 years old and Hispanic, used to think that she was stupid; she was "held back" in third grade three times. And Mr. Robeson tells of his experience in the "ungraded class." He explains that, "the teacher used to come in and get so he was just like a warden, you know, he'd stand there and watch you -- wouldn't do nothing, cause he couldn't teach all different levels."

Teachers were often seen as a problem. Mr. Paynter, an African American man who is 23 years old, remembers that,

> When I was in school, like some teachers would help me and some wouldn't. You know they're, like, try to embarrass me in front of the other students because I'd tell them before going to class, I'd say 'I can't really read so don't ask me to really read because I can't' -- and he'd ask me any old way, you know. And the kids would start laughing at me, so sometime I didn't go to certain classes.

Even teachers who wanted to be helpful seemed to feel that they could not respond to these students' needs. Mr. Paynter continues:

> When I got in the ninth grade, the teachers, they was alright, they was nice. They was helping me but one teacher would tell me, 'You really shouldn't be in this class because I can't really help you the way that you really need help because there's more students,' and it wouldn't really be fair to the other students if she took most of her time out to help me. So I said, 'Yeah, I understand.' And so I would just sit there and just look at the paper.

Mr. Taylor, 43 years old and African American, remembers that, "School wasn't too good for me.... You got some teachers that don't want to teach.... I was in the third grade, the teacher ain't helped me. She made me sit in the back. Give me a pad of drawing paper, 'Draw.' That's what I did all day." School never improved for Mr. Taylor, who was passed on from grade to grade without developing reading and writing skills. Finally, in high school, Mr. Taylor remembers that, "The guidance counselors got some papers, 'Want to get a job?' They wanted me to get out of school. They wanted me to leave."

For many, public school is associated with shame and pain from the time they are young. Mr. Paynter, for example, talks about being assigned to "Special Ed;" he recounts: "I ...was embarrassed so it was kind of hard and I hate when we be standing on line in the hallway and the other kids come by and say, 'Retarded kids.' Like they thought we was crazy." He was upset that he and his best friend were assigned to the same high school, "because I didn't want him to know what class I was in." When asked why he wanted to hide his reading problem from his friend, Mr. Paynter replies: "Not that he would laugh at me or make fun but just that I was scared. I didn't want to take that chance.... I wanted to tell him 'cause I said if I told him he would help me with certain things and what not but I didn't want to do that because I didn't want him to think I would be a burden on him or I didn't want him to feel he couldn't say certain things to me."

Ms. Lopez is now in her early thirties and is from a Puerto Rican family. She was diagnosed as dyslexic as an adult. She points out that,"If it would have been found out many years ago earlier, they would have been able to help out with it. They didn't know back then what was it. They thought I wasn't thinking or daydreaming too much." Ms. Lopez tried to overcome her problems, which also included physical abuse and a period of institutionalization. Neither of her parents could read, but she wanted to succeed in school. She remembers that she would, "listen to the teacher, try to focus on everything he says and ask him a lot of questions. And when I did my homework at home, my older sister would help me out. [But] in school, when he asked me to read, I wouldn't read. He would fail me every time for not reading out loud." As she grew older, Ms. Lopez says she, "cut out a lot in high school 'cause I didn't want to deal with the problem again." She muses, "That's what I found strange, they didn't put you in like special classes to help you out with the problems; they never did." Ms. Lopez remembers that there was an after-school program, but her parents would not let her go because the neighborhood was too dangerous for her to travel by herself.

Mr. Guerrero is 30; he grew up with nine older brothers and sisters, all of whom spoke English in their home, even though his parents spoke Spanish. His parents divorced when he was still young. His family struggled, but he feels he had a good childhood. Although he and his father "never really communicated," he always knew he could depend on his father when he needed him: "I was always in gangs and... I got in trouble and he was always there to get me out of it.... We never really talked, but he was just there when I needed him. Now with my mother I talked many times. She was more closer to me."

School was a battleground for Mr. Guerrero:

> I had a lot of problem being that I grew up in all Black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods. It was like I had to be tough to prove myself that I'm not afraid of them, you know.... They used to pick on me because I was this color.... I used to have to prove myself and I did.... and in order to do that I had to become a bully myself.... I was fighting everyday.... Getting to school, being in school.... As time went by we got a lot of respect and it didn't happen anymore after the third grade because then I started being strong and bullying them and I got what I wanted. And I did what I wanted to do.

In this social environment, Mr. Guerrero felt he "couldn't sit down and take a book and read it. If I were to take that attitude... then I would have had more problems because then I couldn't prove myself... and then I will be picked on more; I had to do something every day to prove my seniority." When he finally felt his reputation was secure and he could turn to schoolwork, Mr. Guerrero could not see the blackboard. He remembers that when he told the teachers he was having trouble with his sight,

> I misbehaved so bad that the teachers didn't care. So they would tell me, 'Well if you can't see it too bad.' Or they would tell me, 'Go to the back of the room,' and I'd tell them if I go to the back of the room I can't see, and they didn't believe me because of the attitude that I had. And then after they realized it, when I got to the front, I had missed so much of school and so much lessons that I didn't care after that.

Similar to other students, Mr. Guerrero found himself in high school even though he knew he could not do work at the appropriate level and, also similar to other students, someone from the school encouraged him to leave:

> [One of my teachers] told me that I should quit school. OK? So I could get a job, because my reading was too behind. At that time I had no guidance, so I said, 'Well, good I don't have to go to school no more. I just go get me a job.' And I went downstairs and I signed up and I left high school. I didn't have no knowledge of what I was doing. All I know is I want to get out of there.

Mr. Delisi also "got in trouble a lot" when he was in public school, eventually getting "thrown out":

> I was a wild kid when I was a little kid.... I didn't bother to pay attention to teachers.... School was boring. It was 30 or 40 kids in class. I didn't pay attention -- my mind was somewhere else.... I was too wild. When it came down to it, I was the one that would speak up. What's right and wrong? And they didn't like it. I caused a lot of trouble because some people followed my feelings, you know.

In high school Mr. Delisi became aware of his reading and writing problems "when I was passing the class and I didn't know how I was passing classes.... They was just passing me." Mr. Delisi attended a special program for teenagers with reading problems, and a vocational program from which he has a graduation certificate -- but in these programs as well he felt he was passed on without being able to perform the work.

Although the usual commentary on adult literacy students' prior school experiences emphasizes the students' "failure" in the schools, these students' stories are striking examples of ways that schools have failed them. As young children they were forging identities in difficult social environments, dealing with violence, poverty, and rigid social norms in areas such as language and skin color. They felt they had to make choices between social and physical survival and proper school behavior. When they grew older and more secure in their social niches, they already had been classified by the school system and were unable to break out of those categories. Large classes and the knowledge that they were being passed even though they were unable to do the work further alienated them, and school personnel often provided the impetus to leave.

These adults felt a deep sense of powerlessness to get the system to respond to their needs, and many responded as resisters (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1988). While some sat docily in the back of the room, drawing pictures and waiting for their time to be served, others acted out, refusing to take the roles the school was defining for them. Their determination and courage were forged in the halls of public schools and on the streets of their neighborhoods; many, like Mr. Guerrero, bring their critical analysis of power relationships to their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City.

"ENOUGH NERVE": ENTERING LVNYC

Some adult students are only now beginning to put the pieces of their lives in some perspective that provides new insights into their relationship with schools and literacy skills. For example, Ms. Sharpe shares her revelation that, "As I grow up, I am recognizing it now, that I had a reading problem." Others, however, are more like Mr. Taylor's assessment: "I always knew [I had reading problems]... from the very first grade, second grade."

Even after they have admitted to themselves that they need to develop better literacy skills, it can be years before someone enters a program. Some students talked about trying to learn from family members before coming into LVNYC, but with little success. As Ms. Lopez sums it up, "You don't have patience with relatives. I never did." Others tried to learn on their own, such as Mr. Mangiapane, by, "breaking up words, learning from my children when they were doing their homework, pick up a word here, a word there, but it wasn't, like, enough."

Some students tried other programs before coming to LVNYC. Ms. Lopez, for example, explains that, "This is about my third different school.... I liked [the last program I went to] until the teacher quit because the students started leaving eventually." Ms. Lopez explains further that even though she liked the last program, she was not making much progress with her reading. She thinks this is because,

> It was too much, the speed -- they expect you to do a certain amount of material within a certain amount of hour, and if you can't do it then you're behind, and she doesn't have time to sit down with you individually to tutor you or help you. So, when I noticed that I said, 'That's not good for me,' so I left the program. I didn't leave it until I found a replacement.

Ms. Lopez finds LVNYC more responsive to her learning goals: " In another school I told them I wanted to learn how to drive and nobody made a big effort to really sit down and help you. [LVNYC] really did." And Ms. Lopez also appreciates the more personal relationships she is able to develop at LVNYC. She explains that in the first school she went to, "The teacher didn't hardly talk. You didn't know too much about him. He didn't open up to you. He just sat there, he gave you the work, that's it. Like high school kids. You're on your own. And I didn't like that. He didn't know if you had any problems or anything, so he never even bothered asking you. I didn't like it at all."

Other students also mention the positive difference they experience between LVNYC's approach and that of programs they have been involved with in the past. For example, Mr. Shabazz, a man in his late twenties from Trinidad, explains: "I have tried two other programs, plus I have tried the night school in my country. The way that they try to teach me and the other people, I don't think I could handle it. They just give you a book and they say, 'Okay, we're going to do some topic tonight, you read and write this topic.' It was too much for me." Mr. Walsh left the last program in which he was enrolled because there were too many students for the teachers to be able to provide him with the attention he felt he needed. And Mr. Delisi left his last program (which seems to have been oriented to adults who do not speak English well) because the content of instruction was irrelevant to his interests, as he explains,

> I felt very uncomfortable, 'cause 'Who lives around the block? I live around the block?' Give me a break. I mean, I'm not here [for] 'who lives around the block.' I'm here to read. I mean, it was like one of those movies. There are courses that do help and there are courses that don't. You gotta be very careful today.

Ms. Leach enjoyed the last program she went to, but, "then they just closed. They just stopped." Which supports Mr. Taylor's concern that, "the most important thing about this program is that it stays open.... You never know, they're always talking about cutbacks on this, cutbacks on that, this got closed down, that got closed down -- so I just hope it stays open and helping people."

Although there often seems to be a "triggering incident," students' decisions to enter the program are not usually a response to one particular event, but rather part of a larger process of change in their lives. Sometimes the change places their need for improved literacy skills in a new light. For example, Mr. Robeson, a former student in the program, had been happy working in construction. When he had a heart attack and could no longer do that work, he realized he would have to go back to school. Mr. Mangiapane, an Italian man in his late fifties, has confronted his alcoholism; he connects his sobriety with his subsequent participation in LVNYC and the quality of his relationship with his grandchildren:

> [My grandchildren] will hand you something and say, 'What is that Grandpa, what does that say Grandpa?'... At one time I wouldn't answer them. I did that with my son, one of my sons, and I said I was going to go to school, but then I was drinking -- who cared? So I didn't bother. But with my grandchildren, I was a lot happier and when I stopped drinking, I came into school."

Ms. Alvarez, like many other students, knew about the program for a long time before she actually came. Her decision to enroll was part of a larger process of examining her life with the help of a therapist. She recalls,

> So many times that I wanted to come to a program like this.... It all started when I was 18. The first time I gave birth, to my first oldest son.... [But] I said, 'Forget about it;' I was feeling bad.... So finally one day, about a few months ago, when I was speaking to my... I call my shrink -- whatever -- I call her my social worker. Me and her were starting to talk about a lot of things and so I told her I would love to go to school and improve my reading and writing so hopefully one day I can do something for myself. And she was telling me, 'What would I like to do?' Well, ever since I was a little girl, I would love to become a nurse. And then she gave me some information about this program so then I went.... I'll never forget that day. It was a cold, snowy day and I came down here.

Mr. Delisi and his girlfriend broke up -- very painful for him at the time, but, "the best thing that ever happened to him," according to his best friend. It had been a difficult relationship in which Mr. Delisi did not feel supported. After the split he started doing new things for himself, including losing a lot of weight, seeing a counselor, and coming to LVNYC. And Mr. Nabil is on a spiritual journey:

> I went back to God, then He pushed me this way. So He just keeps pushing me. One day I said 'Hey, let me make this phone call,' because I had the number written down in my address book on the back cover. I'd written it down there, and I just put 'read' beside it. And it's been there for the longest. And one day something started talking to me, said, 'Get on the phone.'... I said, 'Tomorrow.' And one day I just did it.

Other adults would like to come for literacy help, but they feel they need to address more fundamental problems before they can focus on literacy skills. For example, one former student is scared to leave her children with her husband to come to class because he is a substance abuser. She explains that, "I'm thinking of getting myself together and just go to a therapy or something that could help me," before returning to the program.

Many students heard about the program on the radio or television, called, and came. Others were told about it by friends and family members, some of whom also made the first call. Many were accompanied their first time by someone they trusted. Making the call and entering the program was stressful for everyone we talked with; it required great courage, trust, and, sometimes, overcoming obstacles such as finding money for carfare or childcare, negotiating with spouses and maneuvering through unfamiliar subway and bus routes. Family members and close friends are often key to students' moving forward. For example, Mr. Guerrero explains that, "[My bother] mentioned it a few times, whether I want to go to the program. And I said, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah,' and I pay no mind to him. I ignored it." One day, Mr. Guerrero remembers, "He just mentioned it again and I said, 'OK.' All of a sudden, it just snapped, like, 'I got to do it sometime.' That's the only thing that I was thinking about. I gotta do it sometime. So let me do it now."

Mr. Shabazz enlisted his entire family:

> I had my whole family put up to this, to get the number for me, and one night it came on [the TV] again right after Dynasty... and they all keep calling on the phone,'Did you get the number?'...and if I didn't have the number they call out the number. The next day I took the number to my job.... I could not seem to get through at all, so when I went home very depressed again, my cousin asked me, 'What happened? You are not yourself these days you know.' So I told her, I say, 'I tried the number and I didn't get through you know.'... So she told me 'Give me the number,' and she called the number and the same day she called they had an orientation for new students.... She called me up and tell me to meet her.

Another student describes his best friend's love and support: "He told me, 'You know,' he said, 'you have to do something about your reading and writing. You are going up to New York City and I heard that it's a place of opportunity. You're never too old to learn and please try and make yourself somebody over there,' so, which I did." Now living in the same city again, they share some poignant moments: "He's interested in what I'm writing, I'm reading and what I'm doing and if I'm home doing my reading or my writing, when I have the time and he come over, he try to help me. Sometime I don't really need his help but I just kind of say, 'You want to help me?'"

Some employers helped students take the big step and come into the program. For example, Ms. Sharpe, a housekeeper, explains,

> I was kinda scared the first time when I couldn't read really.... I was kinda scared to talk to my boss actually about that because I thought she was going to fire me. So one day I told her I wanted to talk to her. So she was willing to listen and I tell her I have a reading problem. And actually she was very sympathetic with me. She helped me. The next day she was on the phone ringing to groups to find out which place that have a program to help me with the reading and she found this program.

Because of their prior experience with schooling, many students are questioning the ability of any educational program to meet their needs and to respond to their life situations, as well as questioning their own ability to learn. Their early contacts with the program are crucial to helping students feel that the potential exists for real change through their participation in LVNYC. Most students found that first time reassuring, as Mr. Delisi illustrates: "I was nervous until I walked to the door and I see it was young and old [people], you know. Then I came in, don't have to be nervous. They came down to better themselves, so you could do the same thing."

Test-taking is a major theme of students' stories about their entry into the program. Ms. Lopez, for example, remembers, "I had to take about four or five tests before I got into here.... I couldn't take it. I wanted to cry so much, but they give you a little reading test. They'll read it to you and you write the answers and then the other one you read on yourself and if you did good on that one, they'll give you another one to see how much help do you really need." Ms. Higgins is involved in the same conversation; at this point she remarks that: "If you do too good, then you're not accepted." And Mr. Mangiapane, also in this group, adds, "When I went in, I had a nice person over there, she says, 'What are you nervous about?' So I told her. I says, 'You know, I don't know how to read and write.' She says, 'Do the best you can.' She says, 'This is one program, the worse you do, the easier to get into.' And when she told me that, I felt so relaxed and, you know, I did my best." Ms. Higgins agrees that, "Yeah, my person was nice, too. You know, when you hear them say, 'The worse you do, the better it is for you,' I thought she was a kook." All of them agreed that they were scared -- they had been reassured that they did not have to worry about doing well on the test, but they were very worried about being able to get into the program. Mr. Mangiapane says that he "don't remember a word that was on the test," but he remembers clearly when they told him he "just made it!"

Coming for testing also was an opportunity to check out the program. As Mr. Delisi explains: "I went to Warner Communications to see where your level was.... When I went there I was scared, because I didn't know what I'd see, but I seen there was young and old and I knew there were people there needed help, and that felt good, because I thought I was the only one. That's how you feel when you go there, you feel like you're the only one." Ms. Sharpe, in the same interview group, concurs: "Yeah, that's how I feel when I come in here the first time. I was so scared and everything... So when I reached there I see people all around me inside of here. I felt good. I felt great, because they're going to help me with my problem."

Ms. Altman was scared of the tests, but understood that they were, "about seeing how much you know so that they will be able to place you." There was still a period of waiting to hear where and when to go to class, telephone calls and letters back and forth between Ms. Altman and the program, before she was finally told where to come to begin instruction. That first night, Ms. Altman remembers, "I sat in my car. I was supposed to be in at 5:30. I sat in my car until 6:00 because I was afraid to go in. Finally, I got enough nerve to go in and when I walked in [the Center Director] was very nice and she says, 'Rose, your tutor is not here. You're gonna have to wait another two weeks before you can attend class.' I said, 'That long?'" Fortunately, the Center Director finally worked out an arrangement so that Ms. Altman could begin more quickly.

"I'M GONNA GO FOR IT": GOALS

Some students talk quite concretely about their goals and how developing their literacy skills fits into their plans. For example, adults with low literacy skill levels often feel vulnerable; Mr. Ramirez wants to learn to read to protect his rights better. Many students we spoke with mentioned goals related to their children. They want to be able to respond positively when their children ask them to read to them; they do not want to appear stupid to their children ("Half the time I don't know words that my nephew bring home."); and they want to encourage their children to do well in school so that their children's lives can be a little easier ("I don't want them to fall in the same situation like I do -- have to be guessing through life.").

Other students cite employment-related goals. Some students want to improve their literacy skills to help them in their present jobs. Mr. Walsh, for example, works in security; better reading and writing skills will help him get to new assignments and write reports. Other students want to get a job or get a better job. Literacy is standing in their way not so much because they aspire to jobs that require literacy or higher education, but because, like Ms. Rollins, they feel, "I'm not good at applications, you know?" Students have learned that they can do many jobs once they get past the hurdle of filling in the applications. Facing an application can be a painful experience, as Ms. Carón recounts:

> They give me this application and I do whatever I could, like the address they ask you, but some of them I don't understand so I didn't do it. Then when I'm finished I give it to the lady and she look at it, she say, 'Well, it has to do the whole thing.' So I went back again, trying to do the words, but I still [can't] do the whole thing. When I give it to her, she say, 'Well, I guess if you can't fill it, I guess you can't have the job, because this job we need somebody who really can read.'... I was so upset that day. When I got home, even on the train, I was crying like a baby and I feel so bad.... And that's the same job I have now... not the same place where she is but the same kind of job, the same thing. When they tell you which thing to do, which thing to clean, I can do it. So that was a bad one. That was a really awful one because I feel so embarrassed.

Some students identify specific jobs they would like, usually directly related to their experience: case worker, daycare teacher, florist, policeman, lawyer, office worker, computer operator, post office worker, nurse's aide -- and Ms. Leach wants a job that has benefits. Many students, like Mr. Delisi, simply want something better than they have now: "[I'm a] laborer, pushing a broom, picking up orders, fork-truck driver. And I want to better myself... I want to move up. I don't want to always be down on the ground." Many students are not specific about the job they would like, but they have a kind of lifestyle in mind, as Ms. Leach declares: "[I want to] have my own apartment, you know. Dress nice, you know. Go out, eat lunch out with the girls -- things like that, you know, instead of just going, wearing the same thing everyday to work." She continues: "I like to see myself more independent, that where I have my own apartment, I have a good job, I'm coming and going, paying my bills, have no problems, and living a life that I wanted to live. That's what I would like. And peaceful. And, you know, going to church, and this and that."

Further education is a specific goal for some students; they want to continue developing their literacy skills, get a GED and, perhaps, go on to college. Others would like to go to trade school and, like Mr. Walker, take "a six-month course, [and with good literacy skills] I could finish it in six months." And a number of students, like Mr. Shabazz, "would like to come back here and be a tutor or assistant tutor to help those who not know how to read, where I was once upon a time." Participating in their religious community also motivates students. Mr. Ramirez, for example, would like to be a preacher, and Ms. Walston would like to participate in Bible study class.

But most of the students who shared their dreams with us simply want to be able to read and write "like other people do." Mr. Delisi exclaims that literacy is important just to "move on, to enjoy life out there." Mr. Mangiapane says, "Someday I'm going to write a story and I'm going to be able to spell every word." He continues, "I want to... just be able to pick up a book and just grab it and read it without fighting the words. I want to be able to sit down and write a story and write ten pages, you know, with one error, two errors, you know." Or Ms. Carón comments that she wants to, "Get up and go to the store and buy a newspaper and read the newspaper.... Or if I want to write somebody, I could just write it without put a few words, and don't ask this kind of word how do you say it." Mr. Paynter's sentiment that he would like to "do things on my own and not have to ask people to help me read all the time," is also echoed by many others. And Mr. Taylor wants to learn; he wants to read history books, the newspapers, and emergency first aid manuals. Ms. Leach wants to read best sellers that she hears everybody else talking about, and she wants to read the Bible: "I used to carry the Bible with me, and just whatever page that I opened up to, I would just sit there and try to read that page and try to understand it."

Students shared stories of everyday tasks that would be easier with better literacy skills. Mr. Taylor runs down the list: "You might get a letter, you gotta come here;.. your rent going up; paycheck, they took out something -- you want to know why; a lot of the applications, you don't understand everything.... And you don't want to keep running to people." Students would also empathize with Mr. Paynter's description of a common social situation:

> I have went out somewhere with my friends and we went and and I forgot I couldn't read the menu. And so he's like, 'Oh, I'm gonna have the baked chicken,' and I was like, oh man, so I felt like saying, 'Well, I get what you getting,' 'cause then I said, no, I don't eat that much, so let me get, I'll just get a cheeseburger. So I was looking on the wrong side and he said, 'Over here.' And I don't know if he caught on or not 'cause he didn't say nothing.

These lists of social situations and tasks are not discrete goals; they are examples of ways that adult learners would like to "fit in," to do things the way others do them without drawing attention to themselves and without feeling uncomfortable. Although it is important for students to identify specific situations in which they would like to use their literacy skills, it is also important that this larger goal of learning to apply literacy skills to a broad range of life situations not be lost in the midst of atomized analyses of daily life.

Goals are not only instrumental; they also have to do with how adults feel about themselves and their relationships with others. For example, Mr. Sikes explains that,

> The job I'm working at now, when I had told them that I couldn't read or write they used to look at me all funny and all that and I told them, 'I don't care how you look at me. Pretty soon I'm going to do good for myself and y'all will still be here.'... I said, 'And another thing, I wish y'all two stop calling me stupid and ignorant, saying I can't read cause I'm slow. I ain't slow.... I'm going to improve my reading and writing and prove to y'all that I can read.'

Ms. Leach looks at her relationship to her family:

> My little sister, by me watching her growing up and she's in college now and she's becoming to be a lady -- she's driving and everything -- and that just got me to even open up more and push harder because she's what, only 19 or so. Second year in college, she's doing pretty well -- it's not that I'm jealous or whatever, but then I think back, wow, I remember when I was that age, you know, why didn't I accomplish what she's accomplished... so I have to push myself more.

Ms. Leach's goals come back to her family and her pride; she wants her diploma so that, "My mommy could put it on the wall with the rest of all the other diplomas! That's sometime when I go to my mother's and I look on that wall, I just feel so bad because mine is not up there. Everybody else diplomas is up there. Where's mine?"

Students do not necessarily have a concrete goal in mind, an instrumental view of literacy tied to some specific task or aspiration. More than anything, they want to feel that there are possibilities in the future, that there are choices and the potential for change. Mr. Delisi's dreams echo the dreams of people for millennia:

> I want to become something because I want to be able to move on. Just want to become something. I don't know what.... I don't want that much.... I just want to own my own house somewhere in the country. I like kids.... I like to travel, see the world. I'd like to own my own business. One day it might happen. That's something, you know.

He continues: "Everybody's afraid to make that first step. And then I do. Sometimes I am afraid. I choke off sometimes 'cause you get scared sometimes." Mr. Garcia's feelings are consistent: "I volunteer here, these are volunteers. It doesn't matter how young, how old you are [when] reading starts. We want to come. We want to go for it, just go for it.... Things aren't fair, you know, [in] life. It's a big challenge for everybody. [But] it's going to change the rest of your life."

The extent to which these adults are seeking to assimilate into mainstream American society is striking. Implicit in their talk about goals is a request that the program teach them about class as well as skills, for class differences as well as skills separate them from the middle-class lifestyles they describe.

CHAPTER 4. "LET THE PEOPLE LEARN": THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the nature of the impact of participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, we need a rich understanding of the program itself. This chapter is designed to provide that kind of "thick description," primarily from the students' perspective. First we focus on instructional groups and how they function, since learning in groups is central to LVNYC's program. We also look at how students describe dealing with tutor turnover and changing groups. Then we look at the overall organization of instruction followed by examining reading, writing and specific skills instruction (such as phonemic analysis) in detail. Finally, students talk about leaving the program, either before meeting their goals or as graduates making the transition into other programs.

"GETTING YOU OUT OF THAT SHELL": GROUPS AND TUTORS

One of the most striking features of Literacy Volunteers of New York City is that all of the instruction takes place in groups. Some volunteers and students in the program have been through the transition from one-to-one tutoring to group instruction that has taken place over the past few years; others have joined after the transition. Group instruction requires some skills that differ from those required for individual instruction. Tutors must respond to a range of needs, and must let members of the group interact with each other as well as with the tutors. In addition, many of the groups are led by co-tutor pairs, so the volunteers have to work cooperatively with each other as well as the students.

Groups range in size from two or three to six or eight; some groups jell well, with lively interaction among group members. Other groups feel flat, with little interaction and low energy. Some tutors seem to work well with the group as a group; others essentially do individual work with students in a group setting. We saw more groups that work well than the reverse.

Most students enjoy the group and prefer it over individual tutoring; some would like to have their own tutor. Students support their assessment of working in groups with stories of their personal experiences. For example, Ms. Rourke made the transition from individual tutoring; she says that she "got sort of bored" with one-on-one tutoring; she "got tired of listening to my own work." Not liking the feeling of being isolated from everyone but her tutor, she changed to another Center where there were groups. Now she feels that, "It was great for me.... It's just like a little family.... If we have a problem of something, we're able to call each other and figure it out, what the tutor is doing. So it's great.... We all rely on, depend on each other for certain things." Mr. Jeffries, a former student, also liked his transition to group tutoring, as he explains:

> I was enjoying [one-on-one] and when I got into the groups it made it more enjoyable because now I could talk.... I mean [in individual tutoring] I had some excellent people to work with but I... didn't have the other peers that you could work with. After they got into the group, I didn't want to miss no days because it was so fun. A lot of things was created, you know, we did plays together.... It was more than just reading and writing. There was discussion about worldly issues and things on the corner, on the block. And people had different opinions about it.

Ms. Higgins explains that she had the tutor all to herself and then, "We had the intruder who was [Mr. Mangiapane]. I was kind of like angry because they was adding more on and I wanted [the tutor] all to myself because that's the way I was used to having it, you know.... Then Vito came in and it loosened me up because I -- see, I was not gonna give it up." And Ms. Sharpe remembers,

> When I first came here, it was one-on-one... and then afterwards one of those people in the Literacy office came here and had a meeting. And they said she wanted to change up the group. Instead of them having one-on-one she should put us in a group because lots of sites had them groups and they was working out

> fine. So she said she was going to try us out for a month or two, and if it didn't work, she was going to put us back in one-on-one. But then it work out because some of us, you know, some was complaining and some was saying it was working good for them. To me, it was working good for me. So working in a group, you could talk to one another, hear what this person have to say and, you know, read to one another and things like that.

It is clear from students' language that they felt that groups were "done to them" rather than something they initiated or supported; nonetheless, many feel positive now about working in groups. Mr. Guerrero, however, is more critical. He felt that he was learning during the first year, and then things changed:

> I was doing it, and then, like, I guess, things been changing with tutors.... The first year [was] only one-on-one. And I changed two tutors... because, OK, the first tutor had to leave. The second tutor I didn't get along with, period, because he was, I guess, he was new also and he wasn't too patient. He left.... OK, and then after the first year I had another tutor, really nice -- the one I have now.... I worked with her maybe... about a few months and then... they gave us another student. OK? And then the rest of the time, within a year, I worked with that other student.

After a while, Mr. Guerrero found he was a member of a group rather than a triad: "They took another tutor group and another tutor.... I didn't know nothing. I came and they say, 'Oh you're in this group.... They're going to stay with you for a little while because their tutor's not here. And it kept getting bigger and bigger, bigger.... [Finally] I said, 'I can't deal with this.'"

With pain evident in his voice, Mr. Guerrero tells us that the staff responded, "'Give it a chance.'" Mr. Guerrero remembers, "I was a little mad, somewhat.... [But] I said, 'OK fine -- I'll give it a chance.'" But Mr. Guerrero continued to have problems, "because I can't read this and the tutor's teaching somebody else and I get mad and I can't do it. It's hard for me.... I knew it was a group thing, but I didn't know it was going to be like this." During this period, according to Mr. Guerrero, program staff came and asked him and other students how they felt about the transition to groups. Mr. Guerrero says, "I told them the truth. I said, 'I don't think they work for me.'...

[the staff member replied,] 'Well then,.. you got to give it a chance.' Same song and dance."

Most of the students who participated in this study say that they like groups. This often reflects an understanding of the social nature of learning and functioning in our society (Fingeret, 1982; Kazemek, 1988). For example, Ms. Pierce explains that she likes groups better than one-on-one tutoring because, "certain things maybe I could know, or Simona knows, and then some things Sarah knows that I don't know, and some things I know that they don't know." Mr. Loring also describes this feeling of mutual support: "We're here to help one another, as I said.... That's what I like about this reading in the group, you know. Because what you don't know, you could ask someone else and if you know and they don't know, then you will help." Ms. Higgins appreciates how the group support helps her retain her motivation. She shares something that happened the week prior to the interview:

> [Last week] I came in and I was a little down, right? Before I knew it, I was into the group, doing what I came here to do, but where I had thought I was out of it, I was in that corner, I was so down and depressed, and before I knew it, next thing I know, I done pick up a book and read the whole book during the time and was laughing and joking, right along with them. They just, the group is fantastic. They just have a way of getting you out of the shell that you come in with. You don't leave out the same way you come in.

This kind of bond among group members can make it difficult to join an existing group; Ms. Lopez's experience was positive, though, as she explains, "When I came here, they'd been already here for a while so I didn't know I was a newcomer. Kind of like felt kind of scared, But they really make you feel at home. They make you feel like you're a part of it."

This kind of group spirit does not always develop. Mr. Guerrero describes a student in his group who asked a lot of questions about things that Mr. Guerrero felt he understood. After trying to help the student, Mr. Guerrero says, "It was bothering me after awhile. And she got to talking and was talking about this, talking about that, instead of the work." As a result, Mr. Guerrero feels that groups, "don't work for me.... I feel that I need more attention." Mr. Guerrero comments that his tutor,

> was a new tutor, also, and it was kind of hard for her, with two people that have two different types of levels. She gave us what she think was best for us, and she tried to find different ways to teach us both.... [But] I guess the [other student] wasn't comprehending and I wasn't comprehending. So there was something wrong there.... We talked about it. We had sat down as a group and said listen, this is the problem.

Mr. Guerrero continues:

> I'm stubborn, and [my tutor is] stubborn. So it was a thing that if, for instance, it didn't work for me, I'll tell her it don't work. And I stand by that. And she tells me, 'This works.' And then I would say 'OK, I will try it.' I always try something. And I'll try it and try it again. And then I'll say it don't work and then I'll explain to her why it don't work. And she don't want to hear that. So it was that way.

We heard a lot from tutors and students about the "LVNYC Way," which seemed a reference to policies that had been communicated to tutors through training and to students through their representatives or their tutors. Mr. Guerrero felt that his tutor was a little too steeped in the "LVNYC Way, " that "she was restricted in a lot of ways to teach me in a certain way," and, therefore, "she wasn't herself."

Mr. Paynter has been moved from one group to another and protests,

> I still don't like the group. I mean I like some of the people in the group, they OK. But I'm not really getting enough help in that group because there's too many of us there, too many of us got problems over there. And some of them, like aren't going to say nothing, they just keep it to theyself.... Like they don't know the word sometime and they can't make it out. And so they be stuck. And sometime they don't come in the next day.... Sometime I tell [a discouraged student] we got to ask [the tutor] and keep asking, let them know.

Mr. Paynter explains that "I don't feel like [the people in my group] are my friends, it's just that they're some people that I'm working with.... I'm friends with two of them. But the rest, you know, I don't want to be their friends 'cause I don't like them."

Some tutors attribute problems with group dynamics to students' "poor social and listening skills." They feel that their challenge as tutors is to "get the students to listen to each other."

Some students would prefer a choice between one-to-one and group tutoring. For example, Ms. Mastrionni says, "I think you learn a lot in a group, but my beef is still that many people who come into the program that do not know how to read and write at all should at least be started one-to-one and gradually get into a group." Mr. Guerrero's comments are similar:

> For the beginners they should one-on-one until they get to a certain level and then when they get to the certain level then they could put them in groups that are almost the same levels, you know, that might work. Like I say, they say: 'Oh, the reasons that they did this, because experts say that this is how it work' -- but they're not students.... I don't really know how they really, how they pick their experts... But... you have to sometime be flexible to a degree.... If you have quite a few people complaining that the group is not working for them, then there is something wrong.... What I'm saying is, the levels in the groups, that's the problem.

One of the tutors who participated in this study also has been through the transition from individual to group tutoring. He works with a group that is particularly well-developed, able to work on their own when he is unable to join them. He says he prefers a group and felt one-to-one was "stifling" for both the tutor and the student. He believes he has a greater sense of commitment to the group because he knows someone will always be there; with just one student, there was often the possibility that she would cancel. This tutor also remarked that the group members have sometimes said that they do not have anywhere else to talk about things like the books they have read or their writing. They look forward to the group for the interaction and discussion, seeing it as part of their skill development. Ms. Sargent, another tutor who went through the transition, also attests to the power of groups. She tutored individually for about five months before accepting two more students and forming a small group. It took some time, but "once there became a group dynamic," she attests, "I've had a lot more success in the group than I've had one-on-one."

Ms. Harward is a Center Director who was involved in the transition; she came to a Center that had, according to her, "a prejudice against group work." When the tutors and students refused to cooperate with the new policy of a change to group tutoring, she says that she and the staff "decided to have a revolution there and just impose groups on everybody." A year later, "there's still an aftermath.... I tried to work it up slowly and add a student at a time" to existing tutoring pairs, but that did not work well. Ms. Harward supports groups, but continues to have some problems in her Center.

We also spoke with a couple of tutors who are not sure they agree with the policy. One tutor comments:

> I happen to have students in this group... that are at varying levels, from one that is very just beginner reader and not progressing quickly, and I have felt all along, although I can see certain learning improvements, I've felt that he really needs one-on-one and one of my bones of contention -- and I've made it known before -- is that I think there should be more variation in the groups and not continuously pressing for the large groups. I think there's a need for the small groups and there's a need for the one-on-one.

Summary and Discussion

Most of the students with whom we spoke enjoy working in small groups with tutors; even those who made the transition from individual tutoring to group situations often prefer it because of the added dimension of social support and interaction. Some students, however, feel that they cannot get the attention they need in groups. They would like the option of individual tutoring, particularly when their skills are very low. Some tutors support these students' point of view, while others find groups more motivating personally as well as for their students. It is difficult to identify the extent to which some students' dislike of groups more accurately reflects their working with tutors who need additional training.

Students' comments about the ways that group work allows each student to contribute to the work of the whole reflects some consciousness of literacy as a social practice as well as an appreciation of collective action on some level. However, students' feelings of powerlessness also begin to appear in this section, particularly from students who feel they were given mixed messages about the transition to groups. They were asked to try it out, but there was no recourse if they were unhappy. The Center Directors' and staff members' use of their discretionary power begin to emerge as well.

"There for you": Tutors

Students are aware that their teachers are volunteers; while a few students talked about wanting "real teachers," most appreciate the work of the volunteers. Even though they would like instruction for longer hours or more days per week, they also concede that, "there is a lot of people putting time into helping us, so they are putting in as much time as they possibly can, and you cannot take away from their life. So we have to try to fill in the blank when they are apart from us. You know we have to do our best at the same time" (Mr. Hopps). Ms. Sharpe explains that the tutors,

> go to work from morning to the afternoon, in the evening time, and then to come here again to sit down with different set of people and to teach them from little to next.... They have a lot of patience, you know, 'cause it's not easy to sit down with big grown people. Some of us might not even know anything, and you have to start from them next to nothing.... But I think that they wanted to help and they're willing, and that's why they came, because this is not a paying job. This is just volunteer work.

Students who like their tutors usually describe a combination of personality characteristics and good teaching skills. For example, students in one group explain that they like their tutor because, "She's very interested in her students. I mean, she push us, she push us." In addition, one student says, "She knows how to tell jokes," and another student adds, "When she give you homework to do, you do it. When you come in, you show her your homework and she feel happy about it."

The policy at LVNYC is to assign pairs of tutors to small groups of students. The tutoring pairs all work out unique divisions of labor. Sometimes a more experienced tutor bears the major responsibility for planning; in other groups one tutor may work individually with a student whose skills are sufficiently different from those of the other group members. A couple of tutors we observed work on their own; one likes this arrangement, seeing himself as a "control person," who would rather work alone. The other tutor had a co-tutor originally and has not been assigned a new one since the first one left. This tutor misses the comradeship of a co-tutoring relationship. She also feels that a co-tutor would allow for more individual help for the students. One tutor mentioned that planning takes time and creativity; she misses her last partner because they used to spend time planning on the telephone between sessions. Sometimes there are problems with tutor pairs that don't get along with each other. All of the tutors talked about their own learning as well as teaching -- an important point in a program that is trying to foster learning partnerships among students and teachers.

Students appreciate that they have tutors' telephone numbers. They call if they are unable to come to class, and they feel that their tutors are available if they have trouble with their homework or literacy tasks. When tutors are "there" for students, this includes helping with problems other than homework. Mr. Delisi says that if he has problems at home, he can talk to his tutor "on the side," and Mr. Hopps explains that "Sometimes you get mail... and you don't know what it's all about.... [The tutor] can advise you on what to do with it." Some students emphasize the importance of being challenged to think critically. Mr. Loring, for example, explains that his notion of a good tutor is when, "You don't just read something and just go to write it. You go about it in your self and your brain to think."

Mr. Paynter feels a kind of seniority in relation to new tutors:

> A lot of people come here and they want to help, but a lot of them can't really give you the help because they don't know where to start. They don't know how to begin to help you. And you can't really tell them really how to help you if you just come in here, too, yourself.... But like I've been here for awhile and you just coming here.... Like this one tutor, right? She was so nervous and so shy and it's like I couldn't really say nothing because I was scared I might hurt her feelings.... So I thought, God, I can't say nothing because she too nice. You know you could see... she's trying but she's still not getting it, you know, so she finally left.

Mr. Paynter laments, "Everybody ain't cut out to do it. And you just can't feel sorry about it. You just can't do something if you feeling sorry for all these people who cannot read."

Sometimes students are uncomfortable with what feels like an unequal relationship. For example, one tutor tells about how one of his students told the Center Director that her tutor knew a lot about her, but she didn't know anything about him. The Director told the student to ask the tutor about himself; she did, and their relationship improved.

Most of the tutors are white and middle class, quite different from the students, and four students and three tutors mentioned this as an issue. We did not observe classroom conversation that appeared to be raising issues explicitly concerning the students' ethnic, racial, linguistic or class backgrounds; one pair of white tutors working with a group of black students mentioned that they thought their group was getting "more political" because they were all interested in reading about African American leaders and history. Although these are small numbers in proportion to our overall sample, it is significant because it was not explicitly raised as a question and there are profound social taboos to discussing these issues. One former student who participated in the program over a period of years says that the tutors now, "can never understand where [the students] are coming from.... They just totally seem to be the very middle Yuppie that has money, that has no time to waste and I don't think that's very good.... They really want to help -- I don't think they have the qualifications." A white tutor, in another conversation, says, "I think the students would like to see more tutors that are like them... the same race, and or the same sex, and or the same kind of background in some respect." Another tutor in that conversation adds, "It's not just race -- it's a lot of things." A third tutor, who is African American, points out that the program does not advertise for volunteers in the newspapers, magazines, and churches that serve the African American community.

While we usually take for granted the notion of culture, tutors may benefit from instruction in the area. McLaren (1990) reminds us that, "A renewed understanding of culture can assist teachers to situate their own classroom practices within larger structures of power and privilege so that they are better able to acknowledge the interests served by their own ideological predilections" (p. 23).

"It throwed me back": Dealing with Tutor Turnover

Students who have been in the program for any substantial period of time have had to deal with losing tutors with whom they had established trust, and "breaking in" new tutors who are often fresh out of training. Students often have developed means of coping with these changes, and they share their strategies with each other. For example, in one group interview one of the students, Ms. Karras, threatens, "I don't think if [my tutor] was to leave, that I would work with anybody else." Ms. Pierce protests, "You can't feel that way. That's the way I felt about [my last tutor], but [another student] talked to me and he told me, 'Don't feel that way,' because I might have more than one tutor." Ms. Pierce continues, "I felt like when my first tutor left, I felt terrible, but here come [my second tutor] and I learned to love her even closer 'cause I could understand her better. And then [my tutor now], the same thing."

In another conversation, Ms. Knowles talks about the same issue; she had been "warned" against getting "too attached" to her tutor. She argues,

> Well, it's like you would get if you worked like a nurse or something and you get too attached to your patient or something, and something happen, you know.... But I can't help it. If somebody was nice and you were around them you know, you can't help but getting attached to them. So it was kind of rough [when my first tutor left]. But I hope I don't do that -- get so attached to another tutor like that. I have to realize, it's just like in regular school, the teachers change all the time -- most every year.... But I do think that's one reason it's so hard for me to learn.

Ms. Knowles goes on to attest that with some tutors, "You feel more comfortable or something. Even though they're nice... the spirit have to agree with them.... You can't like everybody you meet."

Sometimes, of course, changing tutors is positive and initiated by the students; Ms. Sharpe originally was assigned to a different tutor than she has now. She explains that her original tutor's "method of teaching was different.... When we sit down to read, he would say, 'Read this book'. And then he take up his newspaper and he would read the newspaper, forget about you.... So a couple of us went and talked to [the Center Director] about it." Ms. Sharpe and her fellow students were invited to join another small group; this is the group she has remained with and enjoys now.

More often, though, students describe problems. For example, Mr. Guerrero liked his first tutor but not his second; he explains that, after the second tutor, "I was just disinterested.... I wanted to try to do something else.... At one point I even wanted to leave the program to go to another program because I felt it wasn't working for me." But he was assigned a new tutor and feels,

> We were going pretty good and then the second student came and it was going pretty good after awhile, you know.... I was starting to pick up back again well, I thought. But then the teaching methods were different, so I had to adjust to that.... And she was also a new tutor so I had to bear with it. And I guess it was the phase of so much changing and so much that it slowed me down.

It is important to remember that Mr. Guerrero has very bad eyesight. His first tutor used to bring in large print books for him and would write using large letters. No one else has done that for him, which may be connected to his feeling that he has not learned as much from other tutors.

Mr. Garcia, who has been in three groups now, muses that each group is different: "Some got different ways, you know. What they want to do, what they want to put down, what they want to write about. Everybody gots different ways.... The second one, it was a very quiet group That was a group, they were a lot of reading, writing. I think that's a little different, it's more writing in this group than in the other one." What this means is that often the change in tutor is not only a change in personalities, but in teaching approach as well.

Mr. Paynter describes what happens for him when tutors leave:

> Each time I feel my reading getting a little better because someone's there and they really care, they really try to help me, that make me want to try and help myself more because they try it and I should try it, too.... So I finally find someone, then she leave, my teacher.... Then I feel myself dropping, dropping, dropping all the way back down where I started from.... And get someone else, they not the same.... 'Cause I could see that they don't really know what they doing and they don't want to tell you that because they supposed to be helping you.

Mr. Paynter continues, "My tutor now, she don't really know me." Mr. Paynter also complains about turnover in Center Directors; he has a new Center Director now, and feels, "This other guy, he don't know me, and it's like I gotta start all over again. And he says, 'Oh, you're doing good,' and he don't know that because he just meeting me just now." Mr. Paynter felt he made good progress with the math tutor in the Center. However, Mr. Paynter explains, "Since [the math tutor] had left, I never bothered to get back into the Math Program.... I felt comfortable with him."

Ms. Leach's group deteriorated during the period of this study. The other students either left the program or took a leave and one tutor left and another transferred to another Center. Ms. Leach was particularly upset about losing one of her tutors; she comments that she feels, "Sad, 'cause me and her just started getting to know one another, you know, and sit down and talk about anything with each other. I can communicate, where before it was like I couldn't even communicate with anybody here.... I miss her." Two new tutors have been assigned, but Ms. Leach feels, "I don't think that I will open up to them as I opened up to [my last tutor].... There's just that feeling."

Ms. Knowles liked her first tutor and was upset when she left. Her second tutor, Ms. Knowles comments, "had her own style -- which I didn't care about it too much.... I couldn't say nothing 'cause she was a nice person you know, but it really got to me.... I just didn't want to make trouble.... [but] I don't think she really know how to do it. I don't know whether the instructions she got or what, but it seemed like I wasn't getting no place." Now, Ms. Knowles says, she would say something about her displeasure, "because it throwed me back you know.... It really throws you back a lot. I was going pretty good and I just got off base altogether." Ms. Knowles feels that her tutors now, "help you a lot. I like that."

Ms. Lopez, a student, feels responsible for helping tutors as well as students maintain their commitment. For example, there was a tutor offering a special class in addition to the regular tutoring. Ms. Lopez is concerned that the tutor, "may quit.... She's been getting a little discouraged. I have to build all her hopes up because some people are leaving.... I let people know, you know, you can do it. Even if she's a teacher, teachers quit. A lot of teachers quit because they feel nobody wants to be there."

Mr. Taylor has had a number of tutors in his many years in the program. He consoles himself: "Tutors come and go and people come and go.... Once you get used to the tutor, it's a little downer. Then you get used to another tutor. They mostly have the same technique that teaches --- it's a little different.... [But] you get used to one. Then, you got to make an adjustment." Ms. Knowles asserts that working together requires learning on everybody's part: "You have to understand the student and you have to understand the tutor, you know. It's just -- everybody got a way, you got a way, I have a way, you know. So most important is trying to learn each other's ways."

Ms. Franklin actually makes tutor turnover and change appear to be an asset to the program. She explains: "I had teachers that I could just communicate with, just laugh and talk with you, but they couldn't teach me nothing. Then next time we'd go to the next teacher that can teach you something. You might have a conversation with me, but if you ain't teaching me nothing, hey, it ain't no good.... So then you move on to the next one."

Summary and Discussion

The majority of students who spoke with us create relatively deep, trusting relationships with their tutors and worry about the loss of those relationships. They appreciate that their tutors volunteer their time and they value a combination of personality characteristics and teaching skills. The students' descriptions of what happens when they lose effective tutors is consistent across all of the students who participated with us. It is a picture of moving forward and then treading water, followed by some (small or large) regression, followed by new learning, in positive cases, or frustration in other cases. Students know there is a cost when effective tutors leave; it only varies in degree.

Students who have had a number of tutors assess new tutors' abilities quickly. They can tell when tutors are insecure or unsure about how to approach instruction. In order to get what they need from tutoring, students informally continue their tutors' training. Students also know that some people are not cut out for tutoring.

Students feel powerless about their tutors coming and going. Students are not consulted in the assignment of new tutors, and they either wait patiently (when they do not like a tutor) or with dread (when they find a tutor effective) for that tutor to leave. When students request a tutor change, about an equal number who spoke with us felt ignored or patronized as say there was a satisfactory response. This issue of powerlessness is important not only because LVNYC is concerned about the quality of the relationships created with students, but also because these power relations are part of the larger learning environment. Atkin, Day, Shore, and Simon (1990) explain, "The students' experience of the structure and process of the learning environment constitutes an important part of what is actually learned" (p. 3).

One of the main reasons students pay a cost for tutor turnover is that they have to break in new tutors all of the time, and when they change tutors they have a substantial chance of being assigned to a relatively unskilled tutor. This implies that LVNYC should explore ways to improve the effectiveness of its tutor training and support system and should investigate the causes of tutor attrition in order to see if it can be decreased. In addition, the program might work with students to identify substantial roles they can play in pre-service tutor training, in addition to the kind of orientation responsibilities they share now. Besides talking about themselves, students have quite a bit of knowledge about good tutoring.

Finally, it is important to examine students' sense of gratefulness for volunteers giving of their time, even though the students feel that some of their tutors are inadequately skilled. This may be connected to students' feelings of shame which are explored in depth in the chapters that follow. As marginalized persons, students have to overcome great emotional obstacles to ask for help, and these include dealing with their pride when they are receiving services for free. This is a problem to the extent that it interferes with students providing open and honest feedback to the tutor, Center Director and program staff about the effectiveness of their instruction.

"ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES": INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AT LVNYC

Instruction is provided in two types of environments; most of the Centers are in corporate office buildings, but one is in a neighborhood church and another in a neighborhood restaurant. The corporate settings are very accessible and spacious; they also can feel alienating and sterile. On the other hand, the community settings feel more inviting but often are extremely noisy and too crowded. Space is an issue raised by tutors, students and Center Directors; everybody has the feeling of "making do." While a general philosophy and structure prevails across all of the Centers, they adapt to respond to their situations.

Each group we observed organized their time differently, but there were some general patterns that reflect tutor training. All sessions tend to have some reading (silent or oral) followed by a short discussion, and some writing also followed by discussion; the order varies. Students often read to the group what they have written, and some tutors will take final versions of pieces home to type for students.

The relative amount of time spent on reading and writing varies from group to group and, sometimes, from session to session of the same group. Sometimes there is a schedule (e.g., Mondays have more reading and a little writing and Wednesdays have more writing and a little reading) but often the tutor seems to respond to the group's needs and interests. Some tutors plan sessions on specific skills, such as phonic analysis or using the dictionary, often following writing. And sometimes an entire session might be pre-empted to work on special topics such as job applications or voter registration. Ms. Sargent, a tutor, explains about "the best-laid plans:"

> The thing that is real interesting is that you have to stay on your toes because some of the most ground-breaking situations have arisen in a reading or writing share. Immediately you may have a mini workshop or something coming out of the fact that one person brings a subject up or one person brings a problem up and it's just suddenly on to something.... I don't think I really got in training... two things. Number one is that ability to kind of roll with the punches because that's what inspires them or excites them,.. and the other is really taking your cues from your students.

Tutors have a wide range of skills when it comes to leading discussion and asking good questions. Some tutors are good at drawing students into a discussion of what they have been reading and what they think of it. Too often, however, tutors' questions reflect their own schooling experiences. For example, tutors ask questions such as, "What is the main idea?" and "Who is the main character?" rather than the simpler, "What is this all about," "Who is this about," or "What do you think about this?" At times the questioning begins to feel uncomfortable for the student, stressing providing right answers to the teacher rather than critical comprehension or group discussion. Some tutors asked students to predict and students often seemed to be unable to respond.

Tutors and students handle the question of homework differently from group to group. Mr. Shabazz explains that in his group,

> We don't do homework here in the program, you know, like you take something home or the tutor give, 'This is your assignment for homework.'... But if we choose to do homework, then it's our choice. We bring it and we say, 'Okay,.. we did this over the weekend,' and it becomes homework when you think of it.

Ms. Alvarez explains that her tutor assigns homework to the entire group, such as a writing assignment, and they share their responses when they come to class again. Mr. Hopps feels that doing homework is his choice, done sometimes, "just to pass the time, just to write." His tutor sometimes will create specific homework assignments for some students. Another tutor simply made sure that all of the students had something to read between classes, should they decide to do so. And we spoke with a tutor team that decided to emphasize homework for two of their students in particular who, the tutors feel, are not pushing themselves enough. The tutors felt that the structure of having homework to do every night would pressure these students into challenging themselves more.

"I always wanted to read mysteries": Reading Instruction in LVNYC

At Literacy Volunteers of New York City, students read "real" books rather than workbooks to improve their reading skills. Ms. Ferguson appreciates this difference between LVNYC and many other literacy programs, as she explains:

> Most of the programs that I've gone to to help build up your reading and writing, they tell you well, your own workbook, and I was like totally frustrated because I had an interest in what I wanted to read and and workbooks, you know -- I didn't want to do that.... I... had books that I wanted to read like mysteries. I always wanted to read them.... When you're going through the other programs, they tell me, you know, 'You can't read that, you have to read this.' So it's frustrating. But when I came to Literacy Volunteers and they told me that, you know, you choose your own material, I like that.

Ms. Lopez is also pleased with instruction because, "They don't make me go through the whole dumb alphabet like I'm a little kid. I mean they just give you the word and they show you how to break it down." On the other hand, Ms. Gomez does not like the instructional approach. She left the program because, she explains, "I know the volunteers are there to help, but they don't help, they don't teach you ABC, they don't teach you 1, 2, 3, they just want you to keep on on your own."

Many students talk in terms of "words;" they talk about words they know, words they don't know, words they need to know, and words they know that others know. Ms. Knowles, for example, uses words as her measure of her need for learning: "I want to start from the beginning because there are so many words that... I'm missing."

One of the controversies in the program during the period of this evaluation had to do with choosing between reading out loud and reading silently during instruction. A concomitant issue was whether everyone should be reading the same book, particularly during silent reading. Tutors and students agree that there is much more opportunity for group discussion when everyone in the group is reading the same book. Otherwise, each student reports individually about his or her reading and questions often become teacher-student oriented with little participation from the rest of the group.

Originally oral reading was prevalent in the program; the staff in the central office requested that tutors switch to silent reading because they believe it is more efficient and will support learning better. However, some tutors have continued to do oral reading because their students request it and feel more comfortable learning that way. Others have switched to silent reading at the request of the LVNYC staff. A few tutors are trying to include both silent and oral reading, choosing the mode that is appropriate for the material being read. One tutor consistently uses poetry for oral reading, for example.

When students read silently, the tutor often reads his or her own book silently at the same time. During the discussion following reading, some tutors participate by talking about their own reading while others only focus on their students' reading. Students sometimes seem to feel that when tutors are reading silently they should not be disturbed and, therefore, some students feel they are not getting enough attention during silent reading. For example, Ms. Stinson's first tutor had each student read out loud; her new tutor had them read silently and Ms. Stinson left the program because she did not like it: "[The tutor] just sit there reading her book and you just sit there and you don't know how to do this, what this word is, and she don't explain nothing." Mr. Neely, another former student, recalls:

> I had a tutor that would come in and she would start asking questions about this, that and the other, we would talk for a few minutes, then all of a sudden it was, OK, I would sit there with two other guys and she would pull out a magazine and she would sit there reading the magazine and she would tell us to read through the book. I was saying to myself, 'Damn, how can you be telling us to read through this book when I can't read,' you know what I'm saying to you?... It continued every week and I said I can't deal with this any more cause I'm not getting nothing and I'm just spending time for nothing.

Tutors have a number of strategies for checking on students' skills during silent reading. In many cases, tutors depend on the discussion period to reflect students' understanding of what they are reading. Sometimes, however, a tutor will sit with each student individually and ask him or her to read out loud for a few paragraphs to get a better feel for their skills.

We observed extensive interaction among students as they read out loud. They assist each other and support each other's efforts. When everyone is reading the same thing out loud, Mr. Jordan explains, "And then I read a paragraph and the next one and the next one.... You help each other.... They used to do it. But they come with a new system and say, 'Well, it not good like that.'" Ms. Lopez likes group reading out loud,

> Because you get to hear it and not only you reading it, but you get to hear how other people read it, too.... 'Cause you hear the pronunciation of the word and... if you didn't even know what the word meant somebody always said it and you figure it out.... You can also help them also by explaining to them what it means. So it's good and we work together and we help each other.... I read out loud because I want to hear my words. 'Cause if you hear it, somehow to me, when I read it here in my mind, it takes me longer time to understand what I'm saying. When I hear it, I understand it better. And you can hear it if you say something wrong or it didn't make any sense and then you can go back. Every time I read I always make sure there's not too many people around. I read pretty much out loud to myself.

Students who want to retain oral reading in the program often believe that they are proponents of a school model that comes from their earlier experiences. They believe that they learn best that way and want that knowledge respected by the program. For example, Ms. Jones explains:

> The teacher, he'd have three or four around in the class and everybody would have a different book to read. And I asked why didn't we all have one book... and I read a paragraph, the next person read a paragraph, and so on, and I feel that that way, the student will learn... and when I make a mistake there is where you can help me.... I feel like we learn much more, much faster, and with a better understanding..... It's the same way with the words.... You read a paragraph and you miss a word, the teacher will check the word off like you know they do. Then the teacher will give you those words to learn, right? Well, that could be a spelling not only for me but for everybody.... I mean, I'm old fashioned, I guess, and I don't know these new methods.... I even mentioned it to them and they didn't want to hear this.

Ms. Jones' adamancy about oral reading seems connected to some kind of image of what is legitimate; she is concerned that she cannot judge or respond appropriately to another student's report when she has not read the material herself. She explains,

> Every time I mentioned it they said no, they didn't want us to read out. Read to yourself. You read what you want to read, let [another student] read what he want to read. Read it to yourself, then after you read it, you explain it to the class and the teacher.... I don't have the least idea why they are doing that, but I don't think that is fair because I don't know what you are reading, I didn't read your book, then you could tell me anything.... When you told that story, you may tell some of what you read, some of what you made up. I don't know. I didn't read your book.... The students get bored some time. They lose interest, doing it this way.... I think it's a good program, I think they just need to get it together and let the people learn.

Ms. Mastrionni also contests LVNYC's instructional policies and the lack of respect for students' perspectives that they reflect:

> I pick up the book and I'm just staring at words because I can't read them. You tell me to write, so I write what I think I hear. OK, so some of it is right, the other is wrong. You're not teaching me what I need to know. Teach me how to break up that word. How to spell that word. How to use phonics if I need it. Don't tell me...'We don't allow that.' And if I tell you that reading out loud helps me, then let me... isn't this program mine? Don't you advocate that? Don't you push that through my head? The program is for YOU... YOU make it better. And yet none of the things that we feel we need, do we get.... And you can't read out loud because the studies say that people that read -- .... I get angry because, don't tell me what I know. I know I'm not no big educator but I know what I need, OK? If I didn't get it in school and I'm telling you that this is what I need here, then, for the love of God, help me somewhere -- don't keep on telling me I'm wrong, I'm wrong and you're right because you have the education and you have all the money and the back up behind you.

Mr. Garcia, however, complies with the policy: "When we started silent reading, it's like you read the page, read the story, and when you finish with the story, you tell me what it was about. It's like a picture back in your head, the words you're reading about.... Silent reading, it's important. Should have more silent reading." And Mr. Shabazz represents the middle: "I am still kind of hesitant about silent reading because sometimes there's a person who does not know how to read, how can you read silently, you know?" Mr. Shabazz points out that, personally,

> I have a lot of problem reading silently too because sometime you meet up a word, you have to stop and ask this person, what is this word, what is that word, you know, and that tends to throw you off.... But I'll adjust to the silent reading. It doesn't really bother me right now but sometimes some books I'm reading, I can't help it, I have to read it out loud. But I don't read it to the whole group.

Some tutors are responding positively to their students' requests for more oral reading; Mr. Marshall recalls: "I had a different opinion about that silent reading and when they came up with that I simply told my tutor that we not gonna have it, I don't care what they want.... When I explained to my tutor he continued to let us read out loud. This way everybody would read and then you would get more out of it." Tutors do this with some sense of conflict, though; they feel torn between responsiveness to students and compliance with agency policies.

We spoke with some tutors who share their students' concerns. For example, one tutor says,

> You don't always have that opportunity to make sure that what [a student] is sharing with you is indeed what was written in the book that they read, because when there are eight different things being [read] and two tutors, you can't always sit over and read every single book that everybody else is reading, so you're kind of like really hoping that they got the gist of it and so we are trying to figure out what are some strategies to combine a little bit of one-on-one with the large group, and do we occasionally pull one student out, like once a month, and go through a little bit of reading aloud, heaven forbid, and, you know, some of those back to the basic things to make sure that they really are making the progress that you think they are in the share sessions, but you're never really sure.... It looks like it's a wonderful deal but something tells me that they could be kidding with me the whole time and I don't know it, so I got to figure out a way how do I really evaluate.

Another tutor in the same conversation concedes, "Silent reading is tough."

LVNYC 's approach to reading instruction stresses meaning and context; the methods are chosen to encourage students to be more concerned with understanding the overall meaning of what they are reading than with being able to call individual words. When students read out loud, they sometimes substitute words with similar meanings to those in the text, and the tutors appear to understand that this kind of attention to meaning is positive.

To encourage a focus on meaning, tutors often will tell students that they must wait until they are finished with their reading selection for help with troublesome words in silent reading. Many students know how they want to be helped, however. For example, Ms. Knowles realizes that not everybody learns the same way. She was frustrated with a tutor who would not tell the students words that they were having trouble with as they read silently; the tutor would wait until the students finished reading and then would respond to questions. Ms. Knowles says that some students do well that way, but she wants the tutor to tell her the word right away, or else, she points out, "You forget what you're doing. You get disgusted. Really makes you disgusted. And it throw you off a lot." Mr. Nabil explains that when he cannot figure out a word, the tutor will sit down with him and, "She just won't tell me the words, but she help me pronounce it out. Then she'll show it to me. Then she'll break it down and she'll ask me how do I break it down? I break it down one way, she'll break it down another. Like correct me.... We're taking it a step-by-step, you know."

When someone in a group comes to an unknown word, Mr. Mangiapane explains, "We'll break it up between all of us, we'll get on it.... One of us usually knows the word." The students still look to the tutor as the ultimate authority, however. Ms. Higgins continues,

> Then when [our tutor] come up, we'll ask it, you know, he'll ask it just to check to be sure that we're pronouncing it or saying it correctly. And spell it., whatever. Or even so much as spelling a word, we'll give it a try and then when he comes in, he will look at it and most of the time it's right, you know. By all of us putting a letter here and a letter there, you know and we get it together. We're more of a family than just students.

Many students talk about struggling to overcome the habit of stopping at a word they don't know, trying to sound it out and getting stuck if it is not amenable to phonic analysis. LVNYC tries to provide students with alternative strategies; students valiantly try to adjust, as Mr. Taylor attests: "I can read a whole line then, might next line, might be two or three words, I don't know. I can read another line, one or two words I'm still missing here and there, here and there. Sometimes three words in a row, two words in a row." Mr. Taylor knows that his reliance on phonics gets him in trouble sometimes:

> They tell you to go on [but] I got a bad habit of -- I just try and sound it out and sound it out but I just lose my thought, the story, 'cause I stay too long on one word trying to figure it out. Sometime I maybe sound it out, then sometime you can't sound it out because the word is, the way it's spelled so that you can't sound it out. And I don't know you can't sound it out.

Sometimes he does just go on and use his understanding of the context so that later, "you go back and figure it out."

Mr. Paynter explains that he tries to help the tutor help him: " Sometimes she try to sound it out for me, but that doesn't really help me because I'm not good with the sounds." He explained to his tutor that he wants her to just tell him the word so he can continue reading; she does that more often now, and Mr. Paynter is satisfied:

> I guess now she's probably knowing that I'm stubborn, and I want things my way -- that's the only way I'm gonna go ahead. But that's what they said, you know, you got to have it done your way.... They got to do it the way that you want it to be done... they here helping you. So they do it the way they want it to be done, they not really helping you too much.

Ms. Higgins is oriented to reading as a process of constructing meaning. For example, she thought the book she was working with was too difficult because, "I was missing out too much on what was going on in the book, so I said, for me, missing out on all that, I'm not really getting nothing out of the story." Ms. Lopez has a complex understanding of reading as a bottom-up and top-down process. She accurately describes her stage of literacy skill development when she says, "I know my vowels and my sounds. I need to join them together." Mr. Walsh's strategy reflects more of an emphasis on meaning; if he does not know a word, he goes past it and, when he understands the paragraph he goes back and "gets" the word he missed earlier. And Mr. Ramsey's understanding of what reading is all about has changed: "I used to go through it too fast, but I realize that I was missing something -- trying to get the understanding of what I'm reading, to analyze it and to get the important part. If I miss a part, then I would work it out... following the story as it go, you realize this one got to be someway within this."

But Mr. Jeffries' story really illustrates the power of emphasizing meaning:

> I been finding a lot of stuff about [my home state], that I'd been living there for 20-some years and didn't know nothing about. Now I'm reading about it.... Found out who I was. Where I came from.... I mean, I was curious... who am I? I'm curious -- and I read, did some research, and I found out who I was and who my relatives was.... I mean, that alone was enough for me.... And I didn't have a chance to do that when I was in school.... They didn't get me curious enough.... I wish people put that stuff in the books when I was going to school, there was no way I wouldn't have never learned to read.

Some tutors take the initiative in helping students find reading material that interests them, sometimes bringing books from home or putting books on audiotape for students. When students must depend on the Center, however, there is great disparity in the materials available in different places. The spaces are donated and not designed for instruction. There often is inadequate space to store or display books and materials. In one Center, for example, there were bookcases as well as a table filled with books; in another, there were sparse pickings on a small table off to the side. LVNYC newsletters and publications were seen in many places and shown to our fieldworkers with great pride.

Students all asked for more books; Mr. Delisi would like to see "More books, gotta have more books.... They have a small selection, but you want more than that. Some of those selections are like the pits, and I mean, you know, you get bored." Ms. Sharpe adds,

> The books that we have them and it's nice books, but some of them are so easy. You know, we could get a little more, you know, harder books.... Cause, I mean, some of them books is baby books. And then again, if your reading level keep going up, you stick on these little books.... So you need something that's as fast as your reading level is going up, you need to go with the books.

Mr. Hopps also raises the point in another conversation: "Some of the people that are illiterate, they are very advanced, and I think some of them need more different kind of books which they can associate with. Give them a little bit more challenge to improve a lot."

Summary and Discussion. Tutors and students are developing an orientation to reading as a process of constructing meaning; this appears to be a direct reflection of LVNYC's use of real reading materials rather than workbooks for instruction. Students want help in a variety of forms. Some tutors are able to work with students to develop a mutually comfortable way of providing and receiving assistance; others, however, seem to have interpreted their training to imply more rigid postures.

The issue over silent and oral reading is another example of how participants in the program -- staff, volunteers and students -- dichotomize some situations rather than recognize and work with the inherent tensions. When we spoke with staff in the central office about the silent vs. oral reading policy, they said that they had not intended for the policy to be interpreted as a rigid ban on oral reading but rather as an encouragement to move students into silent reading. They also said that they would like tutors to use both, so that there is some match between reading purpose, materials and approach. That kind of flexibility has not been internalized by the volunteers, with notable exceptions.

Silent reading does not have to be the kind of agony that students describe. They tell consistent stories about tutors who sit and read silently while the students struggle to figure out why they are supposed to think that this will help them learn. However, tutors can help students with silent reading by providing them with some guidance, as Soifer at al (1990) suggest: "As the learners read each section, they should be guided to become better readers by following certain steps: establishing a purpose for their reading, actively seeking information, thinking about whether the material is making sense, questioning frequently, making predictions, and visualizing" (p. 27). Soifer et al add that, "because many people may be unaware of the thought processes that occur during reading, the teacher might model and think aloud his or her interactions with the text" (p. 27).

In addition, tutors can include both oral and silent reading in instruction, particularly when they are working with students who have low skills levels. Soifer et al believe that, "as the learners become more proficient, oral reading will undoubtedly become more selective" (p. 27). But we should not forget the social functions of oral reading. Students regularly describe enjoying the sense of sharing and community that is created through this activity; even as their skills increase, oral reading can be continued, using materials appropriate for reading out loud, to support this understanding and appreciation of the social dimensions of literacy. The emphasis on silent reading reflects a value placed on individual achievement, while the students are clamoring for interdependence and social support.

Furthermore, the research base supporting a policy for silent reading remains very inconclusive. While there is highly publicized research with children that supports silent reading as more efficient (see Leinhardt, 1981), encouraging an emphasis on meaning and fostering student engagement more than oral reading (Wilkinson, Wardrop, and Anderson, 1988), other researchers question those conclusions. For example, Wilkinson, Wardrop and Anderson (1988) reanalyze the data from one of the most often-cited studies supporting silent reading, looking at the impact of students' entry-level reading skills. They assert that the original claims cannot be supported, suggesting that

> difficulties experienced by [students in the original study with very low reading levels] during silent reading may have been so great as to limit comprehension and restrict the amount of reading actually accomplished; oral reading, by virtue of its requirement for an overt response, may have placed greater demands on students for participation. This combined with teacher feedback in response to errors, may have led to greater gains in reading achievement. (p. 14)

Support for silent reading is philosophically appealing because oral reading brings up notions of young children and tortuous public school situations and can appear to place judgement externally to the student. On the other hand, as some students comment, oral reading allows them to make a connection between their internal "voice" and their "out loud voice;" this is a profound insight for new readers and provides a caution about applying research results from work with children to adult instruction, even if the results seem to be conclusive.

Another issue that arises from these conversations has to do with the types of responses that tutors make to students. We always observed and heard situations described by tutors and students in which tutors (or, in some cases, Center Directors) appeared to feel that they were responsible for solving a problem, whether the problem was silent reading or something else. Tutors did not seem aware of a problem-posing stance in which they could work together with students to place the issue in some larger perspective, raising questions about the origin of students' and tutors' beliefs as well as LVNYC's policies. By explicitly recognizing and exploring the sources of their beliefs, tutors and students may develop new insights that support new approaches, attitudes and beliefs about learning and teaching. The objective of this kind of exploration is not to "convince" students that their request is allowable or not, but rather to help students, "begin the process of transforming their meaning perspectives as part of the process of gaining greater control over their lives as learners and as participants in that social process" (Atkin, Day, Shore and Simon, 1990, p. 4). Students are challenged to engage in a critical analysis that can lead to new forms for students and teachers working together (Freire and Macedo, 1987).

"It's a different feeling to write it out": Writing Instruction

Students love writing at Literacy Volunteers of New York City. We saw students writing everywhere -- in all of the Centers, with their groups or sitting alone before or after class. Students proudly displayed their notebooks and folders filled with writing and enthusiastically shared the stories behind their stories.

Some tutors use reading as a foundation for writing; students write about their books or about content related to their books. Usually, though, writing is a discrete activity and students are encouraged to write about whatever they are interested in. This results in a great deal of personal reflection as the topic for writing, but some students also write about current events or about their daily experiences. Mr. Hines, for example, was, "mainly writing poetry" and his tutor started encouraging him to try other kinds of writing: "[My tutor] ask me, 'Why are you always writing poetry? Why don't you write out a letter or something do something different?' but after a while I started doing other things. I started writing stories like book reports and stuff like that because I wanted to change my type of writing and it was a challenge and he was helping me on how to do it."

Approaches to writing are consistent across the groups we observed, and emphasize meaning and communication rather than technical skills at first. For example, Ms. Lopez's testimony is consistent with that of many other students:

> They tell me, 'Skip the words you don't know, make a line, or try to pronounce some of the letters that you know and if you don't know them all, just leave it.' They'll come back to you later, so they want you to get your whole thought down on paper, even if it's a lot of blanks. But they want it down on paper. Then later on we'll fill it in."

In another instance we observed a tutor going over a piece of writing with a student and saying, "It's not clear to me what you wanted to say here." And we observed extensive mutual help among students during writing, particularly when the tutor was engaged with other students or had left the room.

Many students told us that it took some time to accept the system of leaving lines for words they cannot spell, but now they find it is working for them. For example, Ms. Higgins explains her experience:

> When I came here I wasn't doing a whole lot of writing. I would avoid it because I wasn't sure of my spelling. But now I'll go ahead, I'll try, I'll tackle it to try to spell that word the best that I can so I'll know what I'm talking about when I go back to read it. Where I wouldn't write a letter, I will write a letter now, you know. And if I don't know the word, how to spell it and wanting it be correct by writing a letter, I'll go to the dictionary.

Ms. Higgins continues: "I may not use the word that I really want to. Sometimes I go around another way because that's the word I know how to spell but it's still yet saying the same thing, you know.... Sometimes it's better to just talk it out, but then it's a different feeling to know, to write it out on the paper. You write it out, then he gives you a chance to talk it out also."

Mr. Delisi enjoys writing and appreciates the way instruction has emphasized meaning over mechanics. He explains,

> I know when I keep writing I can't stop, 'cause it's all in your mind.... It's all in your head and you keep writing, keep writing.... I did go back after I finished and then I put the periods, the dots, and the quotes and the commas.... I love writing stories. I don't know why. I wrote a lot. I wrote some short ones. I got me a scrapbook. I bought me a scrapbook and I put all my stories in there and everything.

The entire tutoring group -- tutors and students -- help each other find topics to write about. Often, though, students use their immediate personal experience. For example, Mr. Shabazz "just recently went through an experience with my ex-girlfriend and I had to make a decision and I couldn't help but write about it, you know.... They tell me that's a way to get your feelings out on paper.... They say if you're angry, the best thing is to put your anger on paper. It helps relax your anger, you know." And Ms. Sharpe explains, "I wrote one about the homeless, and I saw this, during the evening I was walking, I saw this young girl. I felt so sorry for her.

There she is, pregnant, and begging for money, with no clothes or nothing. And I went home and I sat down and I wrote a short story about it."

Students read their writing to each other at each meeting, and they respond to each other's ideas with interest and support. Tutors often help students through many revisions and then encourage students to submit their work for publication in one of the books or newsletters published by the program. Students usually keep their writing; we found that students are proud of their work and can produce many drafts of their pieces to share with the fieldworkers. However, writing samples are not kept in any systematic way by the program or the tutors.

"I'm not supposed to mention that word": Teaching and Learning Specific Skills

Many tutors believe that they are not supposed to be teaching specific word attack skills -- particularly phonemic analysis. Yet, they find such skills important to the students and useful, so many tutors teach these skills anyway, feeling that they are torn between responding to students' requests and complying with program policy. Some tutors teach skills in context; they use issues that arise in students' reading and writing as the foundation for lessons. One tutor, for example, generated language experience stories from students' discussion, and then generated skills lessons from the words in the story. We observed another tutor working on problems with homonyms that came out of a student's writing. One pair of co-tutors discussed their understanding that teaching subskills is "taboo" in LVNYC, but they believe that it is important as long as the lessons come from the work of the students rather than being "imposed from the outside."

Other tutors teach skills less contextually. For example, Ms. Pierce, a student, proudly showed us the flashcards her tutor creates for her. When there was a letter on one side, the other side had pictures of words that began with that letter. When there was a word on one side, it was used in a sentence on the back. Ms. Pierce felt her cards were very helpful and that the repetition was essential for her learning. In another instance, Ms. Karras' tutor is helping her develop a "sound dictionary." It includes a letter, then pictures of words that begin with that letter's sound. Ms. Karras works on it at home, and the other students in her group are interested in developing one as well. One team of tutors we observed said that they teach vowels by picking a sound and then asking the students to think of words they know with that sound. They also have students write down words with short and long vowel sounds, and identify the vowel sounds in words that the tutors say to them. The tutors emphasize that the students must say the words and sounds out loud until they feel they can recognize the different sounds.

Tutors also teach word patterns for larger structural analysis skills. For example, Mr. Taylor explains that word patterns have been particularly useful to him: "You can learn a lot of words from that if you know the ends, or if you know all the endings... you know the front or the middle of the word. Then sometime you learn the front of the word, like "con", constitution, conviction... it's like a pattern." And Ms. Walston shares her learning that , "the little words make me catch on to the big words.... Because the little words are easy and then when you look to keep on going that makes you catch on to the big words." A number of tutors also help students develop a sight vocabulary using flashcards. Sometimes these are shared word lists and other times they are unique to each student.

Some tutors are frustrated because they would like more training about teaching subskills. One tutor tells us, "Most of the exercises [in training] centered on how to do pre- and post-reading and writing discussion." She said that she and her co-tutor have discussed the training quite a bit: "The training is useful in that it helps you realize the kind of things you're going to encounter, and ways to structure a discussion. But beyond that -- I know that's been one of my biggest frustrations --

I'm not a teacher, by training." She said she goes home and thinks about such things as how to explain about dropping the 'e' at the end of the word when adding 'ing'. She feels in some conflict, as she explains: "I'm not supposed to tell [the students] this, because the rule is broken, and yet, rules are something to hold on to until you know what the exceptions are.... I mean, a good teacher knows ways of teaching phonetics -- I'm not supposed to even mention that word -- but that to a certain point is useful. I mean that's how I learned."

Another tutor, in a separate conversation, said that he feels that at least half of his students have letter and word reversals; he would like to see the program provide some preparation for tutors in dealing with this. Two tutors mentioned that they have been surprised by the necessity for prolonged repetition and practice of skills. One tutor said, "I mean, we'll do these 'a' sounds for a long time -- months. I mean it's just something that, you know, you just have to do it."

One tutor who participated in a tutor group interview was concerned about the conversation about subskills. She says,

> A number of people have mentioned these methods that they're using that were not -- ones we were really told not to use. I remember being told not to use other students' words; each one should be learning it's own words and so on and I think that it's... I would like to see that in the training they will emphasize the flexibility and not let people think that they can't do phonics. Not to say that we have to do phonics as a main thing, but phonics sometimes helps.

Barbara, another tutor in that interview, disagrees about what the policy says: "I think that training says that you should be able to use every single one of these things. It's a matter of emphasis. You don't spend 90% of your time on phonics."

Summary and Discussion. Students describe writing as a way to express their feelings and ideas, to develop skills that will help them outside the program, and, sometimes, as a political act. Two students spoke with us about writing letters to city officials about conditions they found intolerable; one woman spoke about writing a letter to protest how students had been treated at a national literacy conference.

Writing does not seem to have the controversies present when students talk about reading, and it seems to be more universally enthusiastically embraced. This may reflect students having less previous experience with writing instruction; school models may have less of a hold here than they do in reading. In addition, writing is integrally connected to students' internal voices while reading's connection depends upon the voice of a public author. Third, writing is always a social practice in these tutoring groups while reading -- especially when it is silent -- feels far more solitary. And finally, Literacy Volunteers of New York City maintains an extensive publishing program that is very important to students. Publishing provides a tangible incentive for writing and immediate feedback that is important for supporting changes in self-esteem.

Specific skills instruction is another area in which there is the widespread perception of a rigid rule: no phonics. This is particularly interesting because the tutor manual clearly talks about how to teach skills and the importance of working with skills in context, rather than presenting tutors with a ban on phonics. Of course, the tutors' training sessions may have had a different orientation, and tutors may not refer back to their manuals once they have developed some history with their groups and co-tutors. But there is a prevailing sense of complicity with students against program policy when teaching subskills that should be explored further. It allows teaching decontextualized phonics to be considered a subversive activity and legitimizes tutors not getting help with teaching subskills in ways that are more consistent with the program's philosophy. It also feeds into the general sense of "us" and "them" power relationships in the program that already has been discussed.

"I WAS SAD TO GO": LEAVING THE PROGRAM

Students who stop attending the program are categorized as "drop-outs," meaning that they did not reach their goals, or as "graduates," which means that the program staff feels they have nothing more to offer the student and, therefore, the student will be better served at another program. LVNYC offers graduates the opportunity of participating in a Transition Group so that they can work with a staff member and other graduates to move on successfully.

"Give us some real teachers": Leaving Before Meeting Goals

Almost all of the students with whom we spoke who left the program without meeting their goals initially responded that they left because of some condition that was unrelated to the program, such as health or transportation. Once they realized that the fieldworker calling them was also a student who understood many of the pressures they felt, they became more expansive and willing to discuss the program-related reasons for leaving. These were moving conversations because every one of these adults desperately wants to learn to read and write but very few of them continued on in another program. Most of them were pleased to be called and responsive to the possibility of returning to the program and trying again. They asked for more contact, longer conversations, personal meetings and, above all, help with literacy education. We talked to the LVNYC staff about the best way to respond, and established a system whereby former students who were interested in the possibility of returning to the program could call one specific staff member who was prepared to respond.

Many of the students we spoke with who dropped out of the program left with warm feelings; Ms. Capers, for example, muses,

> I was looking at the card the other day and I was thinking I need to really try to call and get in touch with someone and let them know the reason why I didn't come back because they were interested in me. And just tell them that that's the reason why that I'm not back is because I'm sick and I just can't... but other than that, I'd been there cause I loved it.

Many of the reasons students provide for leaving the program have to do with the difficulties of their lives and the conditions under which literacy education is offered in the United States. Some people say they left simply because of the physical and financial demands: they could not pay the carfare, they could not walk up the stairs from the subway, they could not travel the long distances between places like Queens and Manhattan late at night, or they could not stay awake for three extra hours after working two jobs. Some students were dealing with illness, drug abuse, having babies, moving or changing jobs.

Everyone involved in literacy education has a difficult life, with many competing demands and pressures. Sometimes these pressures get to be too much, and students leave for reasons that are beyond the control or response of the program. Other adults, however, stay in the program in spite of other stresses until something happens -- often, a change in tutors. **The most common reason we heard for students leaving the program for instruction-related reasons was dissatisfaction with the way their tutors approached teaching**. Students usually are careful to say that the tutor was nice "as a person," but was not teaching them effectively. Sometimes a student was content with a particular tutor's approach and left when a new tutor did things differently and, the students felt, less effectively. This comment from a former student is typical: "I feel [my tutor] was very good. But [my tutor] is not there again, and then the way they had it I really didn't care for it."

Mr. Larocco expresses the common theme of tutors who do not seem to be as responsive as many students would like: "Well there was one tutor there that I liked very much. I liked the way she explained things and everything.... Both, because she was nice and she was teaching me but then she got too far advanced with the others and then left me out." He continues:

> I need more of attention than the other people do. See, they leave me with a book and they read one sentence to me and I got to guess the rest by myself which I don't know what I'm doing. So I'm just sitting there and listen and that's what I do, listen, listen....Tell me step by step, you know what I mean?... They put on tape but I listen to the same tape over and over and over again.... I like it if they change the system a little.

Ms. Gomez sums up the feelings of students who were disappointed with their tutors: "Give us some real teachers. If everyone has to chip in, $10, $20, let's do it so we can get some real teachers, so we can get somewhere, because like this we're not getting anywhere." Ms. Gomez feels that the volunteers are not trained well enough; she explains, "Going to school there, it's like asking a blind guy, a guy who cannot see, 'Listen is it OK to cross now?' And he tells you, 'It's a green light, OK, cross.'"

Some students talk about tutors not showing up. A number of students had a difficult time with the transition from one-to-one to group tutoring, and with tutor turnover. For example, Mr. Neely recounts:

> When I first started there, oh man, it was great, I had a great tutor, he picked out a few books and we went through a few books and he asked me what books I wanted to read and so on.... I was tired when I got out of there, just from working and basically, he was teaching me.... But then... he couldn't tutor me no more.... [The next tutor] it was a woman tutor, and maybe that was the mistake. But the second woman who I had, she was great too. She was teaching me too.... But then... she had other things to do, she had to like drop out of the program. Now I'm left again, another month, now I'm waiting another month, I had to find somebody else, and then the summer had just came in and I had to drop out for the summer, and then I finally went back in September and I was told to sit in on a class which was somebody else's class which had two other students, for a week, and then I was moved to another tutor and then they brought in another student and another student and I didn't think I was just getting what I was supposed to get. I don't know if it was the shortage of tutors or not.... It wasn't a bad program, but I felt I was starting to lose. So I thought, let me find something else, maybe I can learn something somewhere else.

The students in Literacy Volunteers of New York City are diverse, reflecting the rich racial, cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the New York City area. The volunteers, on the other hand, are more homogeneous as a group; they usually are white, native English speakers, and middle class. As a result, there are many opportunities for problems to arise simply as a result of interpersonal dynamics and cross-cultural communication problems. Indeed, one of the students we spoke with felt that her white tutor left because she misunderstood the students' statements and was intimidated by African American students. Another student who left the program felt that her tutor and Center Director were unable to communicate well with her as a Puerto Rican woman.

Some students want a program that more closely resembles their images of "school." Ms. Carrera, for example, is not happy with attending a program in, "some church over there. I didn't like it too much. I felt I should go to a school that looks like a school, not a damn office or church, you know?... I want to go to school, put it that way... [to] start it all over again." Ms. Stinson also has images of public schools when she complains, "[My tutor] don't give you no homework." She feels that, "My [original] teacher was so great," but, after she changed the Center she was attending, her new tutor "was no good." Some students feel that instruction did not reflect their knowledge about how they learn best; they wanted everybody in the group to read from the same book rather than different books, to read out loud rather than silently, or to do less writing and more reading.

Sandra got discouraged that, "I look at some of the people in the program and some of them have been there for so many years and I feel it's going to take so long, you know." Sandra also was disappointed that she could not get help with math on a regular basis. And sometimes students left because they had a vague feeling that the program simply no longer was meeting their needs. As one former student said, "You know how you can go to school and feel you ain't learning nothing?"

"It was no more climb": The Transition Group

According to the staff who are responsible for the Transition Group, students come to the group if they are ready to leave the program. This may be (but is not necessarily) because their test scores show their reading skills to be at the fifth grade level. Other students have been in the program for a long time and need a change or have fulfilled their goals. The decision may be initiated by the student, tutor or Center Director. Although the staff say that students decide to attend the Transition Group, students often talk about feeling "pushed out" of the program and may be confused or angry initially. Students are asked to attend an orientation meeting before they decide to participate, and then they have a week to make a final decision.

According to the staff, the idea of a transition group originated in the Student Committee as a way to make students feel more comfortable leaving LVNYC. The first Transition Group, last year, took "too long," according to a staff member, and did not help students to move on very well. This year's Transition Group was given a two-month limit and students were required to sign a kind of contract that says they agree that they are ready to leave. One staff person described the importance of students not "clinging to" the Transition Group as a substitute for their tutoring group.

The Transition Group is an attempt to bridge the outside and inside. Mr. Marshall felt that he could tell that he was ready to leave LVNYC: "It felt like I already got here and it was no more climb just to the top and [my tutor] must of saw that we felt that we knew that we were up there because how we read out loud. We go through and pass at the spot and go on. We was at that level and then he said y'all got to leave here." Ms. Hobson also felt ready, but she felt pushed out at the same time: "I knew deep inside that I was ready because the class that I was in was getting very boring. But I was expecting [the Center Director] to take me out of the group with a couple others and put us in a separate group. She didn't do that. She said, 'Out, out, out, out!'" Ms. Roundtree's concern was that LVNYC might consider her a graduate, but she would consider herself a "drop out" if she did not find another program; as a result, she attends a program that is not very satisfying rather than leave altogether. She explains: "I didn't want to drop out.... 'Cause once you drop out and stay at home, it's really hard. And I wanted to just go.... If I change now, it's hard for me to start all over again.... So I still go [to another program]. I just keep on, but I look for something better."

Mr. Randolph explains that his tutor sent him to the group, telling him that he could return to his tutoring group if he didn't like it. He felt, however, that , "this is a big step so I decided to stay here." Similar to Ms. Roundtree, he was worried that he might end up giving up LVNYC without having another program; "The first night the fear is you don't want to leave a program that's teaching you knowledge and you're learning and you're afraid to go out... there looking for different programs... you feel like you're by yourself, you have no support." The group members soon found themselves working hard: "We had to play it by ear, so we had to make calls on the telephone, call up programs and see if we can come and then make an appointment and go down there and we had no referral list, we had to ask people about programs."

Mr. Randolph learned about a program when he attended a conference in New York City. The program was in the Bronx, a new territory for him: "I live in Brooklyn and I was scared out of my wits taking a train into the Bronx, got off the wrong train and asked someone directions because I don't know how to travel in the Bronx." After he visited the program he had a responsibility to the group: "I had to give the information, come back to Transition Group and I had to explain my first adventure out there because no one else wanted to go." Mr. Hines continues the story in the same conversation, recounting that after everyone found a new program, the group worked on journal writing. But, he says, "That wasn't our focus. Our focus was getting in a program. It wasn't about writing about a program. It was more like carrying out a program, how it feels to ask questions directly... going and examining a program." For Mr. Hines and the other graduates nodding as they listened to him, there is a difference between talking or writing about something and actually going "outside" and doing something. The support from the other members of the Transition Group made it easier.

Ms. Altman believes that the group support was central to each individual's success, as she explains: "I was the first one to get in [to a new program], and then after that everyone said, 'Oh, you got in. Then I know I can get in too.'" Mr. Hines concurs; after describing how the students helped each other, he summarizes: "It doesn't matter who you are or what you are, we work as a group." Mr. Hines is working with others to develop an alumni group now so that they can continue to support each other. He's also concerned about students who left LVNYC without finding another program. He would like the alumni group to help them as well: "Some are scared to go into the Transition Group so they just totally leave the program so we try to stay in contact."

The Celebrations, the times that the program consciously tries to connect the community inside with the students' communities outside, remain important for Transition Group members who are seeking to stay in touch with the program: they are now "outside" and want to retain some connection "in." Mr. Hines explains:

> It was kind of strange to make the decision to leave because the minute you had to sign that document you were out of Literacy [Volunteers] altogether. It made you feel like you couldn't take part and then [I heard] you can come back to the celebrations That is how you can get into the programs.... I said, 'That's it, then.' I could come back and write and share my writing with Literacy [Volunteers] and come back to the parties cause they have food. It was a way to get in. You could come back and take part so I said, 'Wow, that's the best thing.'

Students currently in the program have a number of notions about how they become eligible for the Transition Group. Ms. Lopez, for example, continues to think in terms of tests. She says she will be ready when, "I'm able to take the biggest test and really can sit down and read... They give you a test that, you know, certain level... And if you get them all right they still give you more tests.... When I get up to the fifth grade reading level, that's when you're able to leave." The expert still exists outside herself. Ms. Knowles describes the "test" of readiness another way: "Sometime I can't read the newspaper headline and you have to be able to read the newspaper before you can leave here."

Students who have left the program and investigated other programs have difficulty finding programs that are at the appropriate skill levels, responsive to the students' interests, and supportive. For example, Ms. Ferguson says,

> I was thinking... how Literacy Volunteers supports you a lot.... I guess you can adjust to that support and I guess smothered, smothered in it. It sort of like cripples you... it's hard for you to go out and look for other programs. And to the point where it's really scary. But then, once you get out there and you see that it's totally different on the outside, they do not play. In other programs, they do not play... they mean business!

Another former student attests: "[There] is nothing there for people who come from an elementary setting,... take them from the elementary setting and put them into a high school.... And they telling everybody, couple of years or a year, you be getting your GED. That's one of the more phoney situations."

Literacy Volunteers of New York City has been describing students who go through the Transition Group as having "graduated," and many students are proud of that designation. Not everyone likes that term, however. For example, Ms. Ferguson says, "I don't like that 'graduated.'" She continues: "There's assumptions -- and then I don't even have the piece of paper to say, 'Here, I've got a high school diploma,' saying I went all through those years of schooling and I am a real reader and writer." Ms. Mastrionni agrees with her: "I hate that word because I know in my heart that I haven't graduated from nowhere to nothing." Ms. Mastrionni, however, is disillusioned about finding another program. She continues,

> There is no other place for me to go -- believe me, I've looked, I've tried, and they're all starting me from the same place that Literacy Volunteers was starting me from, and I'm not learning anything that way, because what they're teaching me -- why should I spend my carfare and my good time, when I could do it at home on my own, OK? I need more and they don't offer more and there isn't another program out there that, so far, that I have seen that can offer me more., OK? Not that I'm so intelligent or that I know so much, I just -- they're boring. They don't offer me anything.

Ms. Franklin, a recent graduate of the program, would like to see the transition take place at a higher skills level. She agrees with Ms. Mastrionni that there is not another satisfactory program for her. She asks,

> If they can't expand the program for us to go, not onto the fifth grade level, least to the sixth, seventh grade level, it will be fine -- but have this level somewhere else. You know, not with the ones that's just learning out like we did. We need a level of our own in Literacy [Volunteers] and we should have one so we can continue on, instead of running round looking for other schools.... We need one more thing and that's for the sixth and seventh grade levels, to get us that far. Then we can go out into the world.... But if it was left up to us, a lot of us wouldn't even have left. But we are at that stage that we have to get out, they have taught us as much as they could with the tutors that they have because that is far as our level as they go.

Summary and Discussion

The cost of tutor turnover is particularly keenly felt among the students who dropped out of the program. They feel that school has failed them once again. It is striking that they describe so many things in ways that are similar to the descriptions of current students; at some point, however, they decided to stop "making do." We need much more information to develop a complex understanding about the relationship between these persons, the situation and their decision to leave the program. But it seems clear that relationships with tutors are central to helping students maintain their involvement. It is important to note that students focus on their learning in relation to tutors. These data support the conclusion that simply working with a caring individual is not sufficient.

The transition process is still too new to be able to see patterns over time, but students should be followed to see if they continue to participate in educational programs. It is important to respect the fact that they consider themselves drop-outs if they stop participating in instruction, even if LVNYC considers them graduates.

It also seems logical to re-examine the program's decision to work with students only up to a fifth grade equivalent level. Grade levels are not useful constructs in adult literacy. They do not represent information about how adults are able to use their literacy skills, although the overall goal of instruction is to help students develop skills that they can use in their daily lives. They also do not reflect adult students' degree of vocabulary development or general knowledge and ability. Certainly there has to be a boundary set up that delimits the program's responsibility; this particular boundary (fifth grade level), according to early conversations with staff members, was largely inherited from previous program policies rather than purposively chosen, however. It generally translates into students having some skills, but not enough to enter a high school equivalency preparation program (GED). Students find that it is difficult to find programs that provide instruction on this middle level, or that approach instruction in ways that students have come to value through their participation in LVNYC.

Direct examination of skills is a more useful way of examining this issue. Norman and Malicky's (1987) research provides strong support for LVNYC's approach to reading instruction (and, indeed, to literacy in general) emphasizing meaning and encouraging students to bring their background knowledge to the text. Norman and Malicky support the importance of helping students move from print-based to knowledge-based models of reading, transforming their focus on words and sounds to an orientation more strongly linking their own knowledge and the text.

Norman and Malicky (1987) used oral reading miscue analysis to test 123 adults whose reading test scores portrayed their skills between the first and eighth grade levels. They claim that their results support the notion of two stages of adult reading development such as those proposed by Chall (1983). Their research results show that adults' reading strategies begin to change from being more print-based to more knowledge-based between levels three and four. At reading level four, "there was a marked increase in use of language knowledge and to a lesser extent background knowledge to predict words while reading" (p. 304).

Norman, Malicky and Fagan (1988) identify the students reading at the fourth level as "at a transition point between early and later literacy development". This group is typified by its ability to "integrate knowledge with print or text information," although they are not consistent and this ability "breaks down at some point." The authors, therefore, label this as a group in transition that is, "endeavoring to use print and knowledge together but are not always successful" (p. 22). As students advance beyond the transition point, Norman and Malicky find that they are "able to take full advantage of the extensive knowledge which they bring to the learning situation" (p. 308). Therefore, skills assessment that focuses on the strategies students use with text, identifying them as primarily text-based, knowledge-based, or in transition, could lead to a policy to work with students until their skills are firmly grounded in a knowledge-based approach (generally recognized as between the seventh and eighth grade level equivalent). The present policy may be asking students to leave the program at a point when they are particularly vulnerable; they may be in transition to skills that will enable their continuing independent learning, but those skills may not be solidified yet.

CHAPTER 5. "IT'S A BEAUTIFUL FEELING": SKILL DEVELOPMENT INSIDE THE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

"Yes, I am learning," was the overwhelming conclusion of the large majority of students with whom we spoke and, as we listened to students' stories, a mosaic of consequences of program participation emerged. Actual changes in skills is only the foundation that supports numerous impacts on life inside and outside the program.

As we talked with students about their participation in LVNYC and what impact it has had on their lives, we were confronted with an impressive array of narratives of change and limits to change. As we worked with students and program staff to make sense out of all of these stories, to find the patterns in the weave, we came to an even deeper understanding of literacy as social practices. It became clear through students' experiences that impact is situational. In order to understand the impact of participation, therefore, we must look at students' lives and try to understand the relationship between the person, the social situation, and literacy. We have to understand that literacy is not only *in* situations, but literacy change has an impact *on* the situation, as well. This is a much more contextualized view of impact than is usually found in evaluation studies. This chapter and the one that follows are organized according to the situations in which students create and discover the impact of their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City.

The two broad categories of situations in which students develop and use their literacy skills are inside and outside the program. Students make this distinction in numerous ways; for example, they talk about using their skills "outside" and knowing that they can get help "inside." The categories of inside and outside represent situations in which students make certain assumptions. For example, inside the program students know that information about their literacy skills is known and that the status of their skills is shared by many other persons. Inside the program is a haven for many students, a place where there is the potential to feel valued rather than devalued, central rather than marginalized, part of a team rather than isolated. Students often feel that they are promised some measure of control in this setting, and some amount of predictability. Therefore, they feel particularly upset when tutors and groups are changed without their participation in the decisions and with little predictability. We also include activities that are generated and supported by the program, such as presenting LVNYC to the media or attending conferences, as connected to the domain inside the program, although they may actually take place outside. They remain connected to the feeling of haven and support that comes from being inside the program.

Students feel stigmatized outside the program by their poor literacy skills. There are additional dimensions to students' struggles to manage their identities as they confront the limits to their control over the larger social world's predictability. Students keenly feel the societal pressures for independent action and individual achievement. Some students build social structures outside the program that help them feel safe, while others are loners, allowing other adults into their lives only inside the program.

There are private and public situations and practices inside and outside the program. Private and public **situations** have to do with the extent to which students *feel* private or public; that is, the extent to which they feel that they are controlling the information being communicated about them to others as well as the identities of those other persons. Private situations occur when a student is alone or with well-known and trusted others, such as in their tutoring groups or with their families at home. Public situations occur when other people are involved who are not known and trusted, or when skills use is open to the scrutiny of such persons. Students are in public situations inside the program when they help with tutor training; outside the program, filling in a job application at a personnel office is a public situation.

Private and **public practices** have to do with the extent to which skills must be applied to a task in ways that are socially defined and normatively judged. For example, private practices are when students perform a task idiosyncratically, personally constructing a response that reflects their lives, personalities and skills; it is personalized and judgment about adequate performance resides more in the person than in the situation. This may include writing stories or reading novels. Public practices can be understood to reflect social conventions, such as correctly writing checks or marking the answer sheets on standardized tests.

We find that students are most concerned about the interaction of these two dimensions. In other words, they are worried that they may not conduct themselves appropriately -- according to social, or public, conventions -- when in a public situation. Therefore, public practices in private situations, such as sitting at home writing out checks, reduces anxiety. However, when there are persons in the home with whom the students are not comfortable revealing their literacy skills, such as a non-family member, then home becomes a public situation. These categories are somewhat dynamic and are defined by each student.

There may be aspects of practices that are both private and public. For example, students may be in a public situation, riding the subway. They are engaging in a private practice, reading the posters in the subway cars for skill development. However, students also feel that there are socially inacceptable public reading behaviors, such as moving their lips and subvocalizing. Thus, they feel pressures to conform to their understanding of the rules of public practices in public situations, even though the task itself, practicing their skills, is private (see Figure 3).

Impacts of Program Participation

(Specific instances are intended only to be explanatory, not inclusive)

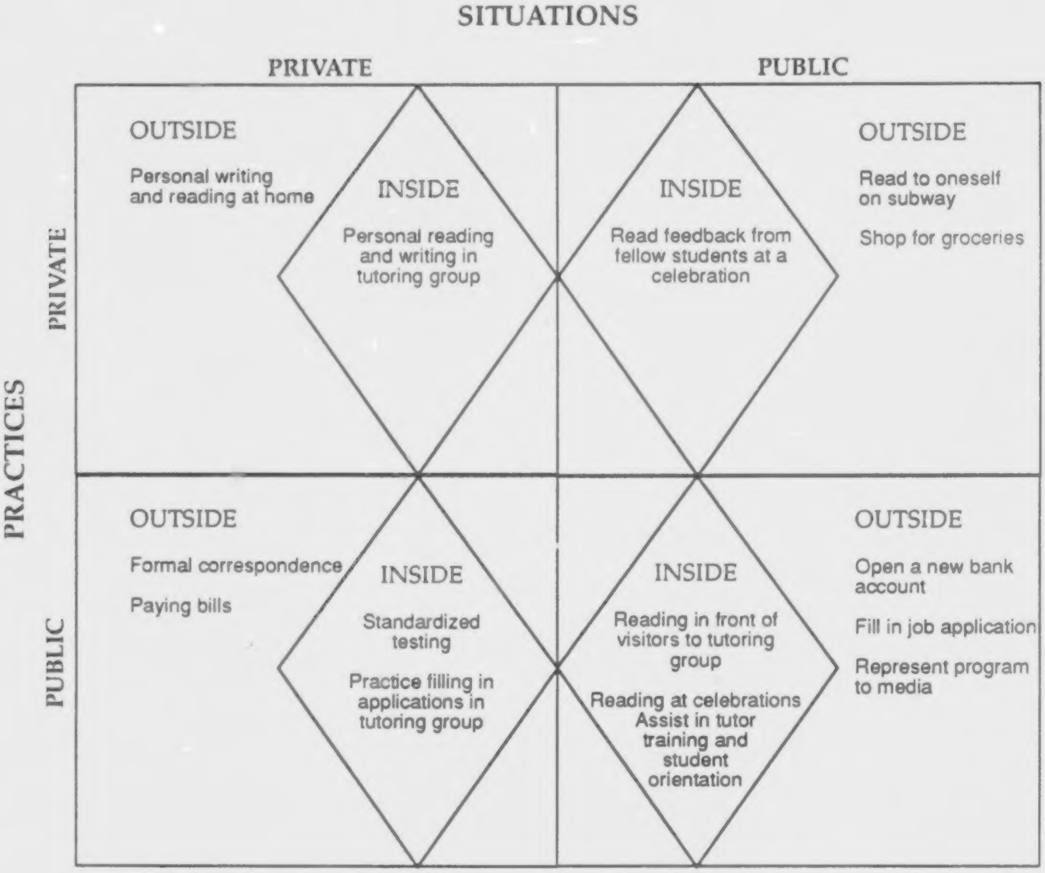

SITUATIONS
PRIVATE
PUBLIC
PRACTICES
PRIVATE
PUBLIC
OUTSIDE
Personal writing and reading at home
INSIDE
Personal reading and writing in tutoring group
INSIDE
Read feedback from fellow students at a celebration
OUTSIDE
Read to oneself on subway
Shop for groceries
OUTSIDE
Formal correspondence
Paying bills
INSIDE
Standardized testing
Practice filling in applications in tutoring group
INSIDE
Reading in front of visitors to tutoring group
Reading at celebrations
Assist in tutor training and student orientation
OUTSIDE
Open a new bank account
Fill in job application
Represent program to media

Figure 3

Presenting impact in this framework is consistent with viewing literacy as practices rather than as a characteristic of a person (Scribner, 1987); impact will be seen differently in private and public situations. Lytle (in press) observes, "A person's literacy profile might be conceptualized as a contemporary quilt in progress, a kind of patchwork whose configuration is closely linked to specific settings characterized by specific opportunities and constraints" (p. 8). As the situations change, literacy use may also change, so, as Lytle explains, "any individual's quilt will be both unique and dynamic. Rather than positioning literacy development of individuals in relation to a normative framework, then, this perspective suggests that individuals function within complex, interrelated social and cultural systems" (p. 8).

This chapter contains information about how students judge the extent to which they have developed new literacy skills and are meeting their learning goals inside the program. In the next chapter we move to situations outside the program, examining private and public practices there as well. Participation in activities that are labeled as leadership development by Literacy Volunteers of New York City is analyzed in Chapter Seven, however, even though those activities occur inside the program. This reflects the status of the leadership development activities as an instructional and programmatic focus in their own right. Chapter Eight contains information about students' learning as reflected in standardized test scores.

Learning does not happen in a straight line. The students we spoke with describe the cumulative impact the program has had over the period in which they have been involved, which varies from a few months to more than ten years. Often students who have been in the program longer describe times they felt they were learning more and times they were learning less. This may be connected to events in their lives outside the program (e.g., learning slows during a period of illness in the family) or to the program itself. Mr. Guerrero, for example, feels that he is not getting enough attention in his group. He reflects that, "I was going smoothly and going smoothly and I started realizing that I'm not moving any more." Mr. Taylor seems reticent to talk about change; he feels he has made progress, but he feels overwhelmed by how far he thinks he still has to go. In general, however, the students who participated in this evaluation spoke very positively about change in their skills and in their ability to use their skills in their daily lives.

INSIDE AND PRIVATE: READING AND WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Students work on skill development with their tutors and other students inside the program. They see progress through changes in how they do school tasks and how they perform on tests.

"I feel like a different person": General Skill Development

Many students talk generally about improvements in their reading and writing skills, citing how they feel rather than citing evidence of specific skill changes. Ms. Higgins, for example, says, "It's nothing that no one have to really come up and tell you, it just something within the inside of you lets you know that you are, you know, you're much better than what you were." But many students offer examples of things they can do during their tutoring sessions as a result of their participation in the program. It is notable that students do not talk in "school" terms; they illustrate their points with reference to real reading and writing tasks rather than test scores or workbook progress. This appears to be a direct reflection of the way that LVNYC provides instruction. For example, Mr. Walsh proudly attests, "I couldn't read a whole book by myself like I can read now." Ms. Hobson says that the first time she really knew she was learning was when she could, "pick up a book, the first time you could pick up a pen and write and don't think about what you're writing, you just putting it there, whether you can spell it or not."

Literacy Volunteers of New York City students spend a lot of time writing, and slowly they see that they use, "more longer sentences, more filling out the pages, more putting more words into the story, bigger words" (Mr. Taylor). Mr. Sikes comments, "I feel real good that people around here are interested in my writing and want to read it." Ms. Pierce remembers first hearing about writing the first letter and a line for words that she didn't know how to spell; she comments, "And I used to say to myself, now how am I ever going to learn that. I thought to myself, 'It's crazy,' but as I keep coming and I begin to notice first sounds of words.... The more I did it, the more things came to me. So now I enjoy it." Ms. Higgins has a new tool: "I'll go to the dictionary, now. If I have to go all the way down until I find it, I have it in my mind what the word looks like, but I just can't seem to get it together on the paper, so I'll go through and I'll find the word and I'll read the definition of it so then it looks like what I'm saying." Mr. Hopps says he sees progress,

> because now I can take up a pen or a pencil and a paper and I can write a few things that I'm interested in, as they taught us that we can write about anything. So, things that we write about, we are able to read it, and that also show me that whatever you decide to do, you can do it if you try hard enough. You might make mistakes a lot. But when you write it, for your own self, when you going back over it, you know what the words are even though it's wrong.

Personal writing provides some students' first opportunity to reflect on their lives. Ms. Leach remembers her first writing experiences at LVNYC, "I wrote about myself and what I want to do in life and everything and that was my first time ever you know, really writing about myself 'cause I never used to, you know, really sit down and write about myself. I'd just write about things, you know, but not really what I want to do at my life's time." It had an impact on Ms. Leach in two ways. First, as she says, it showed her that she can write: "I can do it. I just have to push myself more and stop saying it and do." In addition, she now has a new tool for personal growth and insight: "'Cause sometime you can notice yourself or even see yourself just by writing it out sometimes. And sometimes people walk around with a blindfold over their faces -- don't even realize they're here." Ms. Higgins also talks about how writing helps her deal with her feelings and develop insight:

> I used to have a job, a case. It used to upset me all the time -- I had to get out some of my frustrations. I'd just put it down on the paper, you know. So I used to write concerning about what my day was like on this particular case, you know.... I was able to get it down on the paper and to express it, so I wouldn't have all this anger, taking it home all the time.

Students are equally attentive to changes in what they can read; Mr. Paynter's judgement is an example: "I couldn't really read nothing at first, and I used to get real mad and what not. Now I see a lot of words that I know and I really didn't know them before and so it's made me feel like I'm learning something. It might not be a lot but it's enough for me to know that you know I'm getting somewhere." And Ms. Higgins exclaims: "My reading has improved. I can break up words now, and I amazes myself sometimes on the words that I didn't know I knew."

Students are looking for reading material that will be interesting, challenging and within reach; watching their progression through books of increasing difficulty is one gauge for reading skill development. As skill develops, Ms. Lopez explains:

> Some of the books you read in the beginning may be a little bit easier. It becomes too easy because you get bored too easy. Let's say, this book, I just picked it up now. If it's too easy for me I'll just put it back because then I want to challenge myself into something a little bit more harder. So you can tell the change as your reading.progress is growing. Some books are easy, some books are a little harder.

Speed and comprehension are additional ways that students assess their skills. For example, Ms. Higgins feels good because: "My speed has picken up and I understand more about what I'm reading now than I did before. Sometimes I have a difficulty on remembering what I read, but if you catch me right then after I read it, I can tell you, but now don't catch me an hour or two later. I might don't remember exactly, but I can tell you something about it."

A few students distinguish between new learning and remembering things they used to know; for example, Mr. Guerrero says: "I knew how to read a little, but in that [first] year [in LVNYC] I remembered, you know,... I remembered from the past, about high school, you know, things that I learned in high school that I forgot... And it's like, once you do something every day and then you don't do it for a long time, you have to go back."

Mr. Garcia expresses many students' sentiments about their experience with the relationship between reading and writing when he summarizes:

> The first time I struggled a little bit to read, then it was very big experience for me, the first time. Then my tutor was very patient; every word, I used to come right there, and stop, and stay on the word right there, each and every time.... Then he told me to keep writing, write your own stories about what you saw, what you are going through, and I did, I kept writing, and... I really learned how to read, little by little. The first time it was very difficult, now it's great, you know. It really changed me -- look, I feel like a different person.

Many students requested longer hours and additional days for tutoring, since they believe that their progress in the program is limited by their brief time in class. As one person explained, "The students that are going through the program now will learn how to write a letter to a friend, Dear So-and-So, but I don't think they'll ever get past that.... The students today, they get an hour-and-a-half of study two days a week.... There's no way in the world that you're gonna learn that much in an hour-and-a-half." And Ms. Ferguson also expresses her frustration with limited instruction in a broader range of writing modes:

> You're taught to write, to put your thoughts down. But what happens when you have to write a business letter? Something like that. And it's not saying that you're not going to have to do that, but you do. What happens if you get a job as a Clerk Typist and you're asked to take dictation? You're stuck... because all you know how to do is write your feelings down. You can't do any other business type of writing.

From time to time there is instruction in areas other than reading and writing. Math is offered in some centers, assistance with filling in forms and reading bills is available at times, job preparation workshops have been held, and Ms. Lopez attended a group preparing her for her driver's license test as well as a Bible study class for a while. These additional activities are not available on a regular basis, and do not seem to be as stable as the basic tutoring. Students consistently mentioned a desire for dependable math tutoring.

"It didn't make no sense": Standardized Reading Tests

Standardized tests and writing are the main programmatic sources of information about student progress. Testing is a major source of stress for students. Literacy Volunteers of New York City gives students mixed messages about tests. Students know that tests are required for reports to funders and that the information is used for certain decisions, such as admission into the program and readiness for transition out. At the same time as the tests are imbued with these gatekeeper functions, the program also is trying to consistently convey the message that reading materials and writing tasks should be relevant to students' lives and experiences. Students are taught to use their prior knowledge when reading and writing. Tutors contribute to the mixed messages. For example, one tutor said that he tries to help his students develop test-taking skills but he also tells his students, "'Look, this is totally unimportant, we have to do it, so we're going to,'" Tutors are asked to support the testing program, but they are upset that the test results are not communicated to them in any systematic way.

In this context it is interesting to hear the students' critiques of the tests as well as their struggle to learn something meaningful from their performance. In a group interview, Ms. Lopez opens the conversation with a simple statement: "They test you every six months," and Ms. Higgins adds her judgement: "It's a ridiculous test." Mr. Mangiapane shares, "I just came out even. I didn't go down and I didn't go up. I stayed at a standstill," and he explains his performance: "When I took the test before, I was running through it and I was trying to get as much done as possible, so naturally I was going fast, and... sometimes I'd take a guess at it, you know, and I would hit it, so I was lucky. This time, I took my time and I wanted to get them all right, which I done very well, but I didn't do as many questions, so they came out even." Ms. Higgins admits, "The last time I took the test, I failed it, see I came up two grades on one test and one test I stayed about where I was.... It made me feel great when I came up two grades but then on this other test, I didn't feel too bad because I didn't know nothing concerning about what they're talking about.... It didn't make no sense from head to tail." Mr. Mangiapane agrees, "Yeah, one part didn't make sense, but it doesn't bother me, you know." And Ms. Higgins adds, "It don't bother me at all. What do I know about making bridges... or catching Moby Dick by his toe, you know." Mr. Mangiapane agrees; "Sooner or later, I figure some day I'll take the test and I'll get to understand it." At this point, the group laughed. Ms. Higgins went on: "What do I know about that, so... I don't quite feel bad about something that I don't know nothing about. I don't feel bad about it, you know."

This doesn't mean that the students feel OK about taking the tests. As Ms. Higgins explains, when she knows the time for testing is coming, "I try to avoid it as much as possible. I don't get out of the tests -- I try to avoid them, but I don't get out of them." This means,

> not reminding them and when they come up and tell you, 'Well, Ms. Higgins, it's time for a test. When you want to schedule it?' 'I'll let you know.'... But, eventually, you not letting them know, so they come and tell you. So that's how you avoid it, you know, but basically the test is on, and sometimes you don't realize until you're gone halfway through that test that you had it before.

Mr. Mangiapane explains, "Yeah, it's only just rearranged." Ms. Higgins agrees: "They rearrange it somehow or other and you're thrown -- until you get to those stupid questions!" Mr. Mangiapane agrees that he remembers the "stupid questions." Ms. Lopez concurs: "That's the same way it works on me. I've taken so many tests."

Ms. Higgins goes into more detail about "stupid questions:"

> You know, as the test begins, smooth sailing here, hum? Smooth sailing. But then all of a sudden it hits you -- Wow! They come up with these ridiculous --

> something that don't even have to do with everyday life or anything, you know, and it really throws you.... You don't know where they got it from -- they pick it up outta somebody's hat, whatever, you know. I don't know how you would describe it, but... it blows your mind!

In spite of all this, Ms. Higgins still says, "Just the word, test, frightens me." Ms. Lopez is comforted, however, "because these tests are not going to go on my record or my grade," a set of associations from public schooling; Mr. Mangiapane agrees, "They're not going to hurt you none."

Summary and Discussion

Students are used to associating literacy with private situations in which only close friends and family members see their abilities and limitations. As they develop trust in their tutors and their tutoring group members, classes take on many of the characteristics of private situations. When the groups do not jell, trusting interpersonal relationships fail to become established, students continue to protect themselves, and the situation feels public even though it is inside the program. We saw many more groups that operate well than the opposite.

Since the program is concerned with how students learn inside and can use their skills outside, it is important to examine the relationship between learning inside and outside of schools. In traditional education, school learning is primarily individual and judgements are made of individual achievement. Resnick (1987) claims that, "In contrast, much activity outside school is socially shared. Work, personal life, and recreation take place within social systems, and each person's ability to function successfully depends on what others do and how several individuals' mental and physical performances mesh" (p. 13). She examines programs that effectively teach thinking skills and higher order cognitive abilities and finds that they share many characteristics with out-of-school cognitive activity.

Resnick explains in more detail:

> First, most of the effective programs have features characteristic of out-of-school cognitive performances. They involve socially shared intellectual work, and they are organized around joint accomplishment of tasks, so that elements of the skill take on meaning in the context of the whole. Second, many of the programs have elements of apprenticeship. That is, they make usually hidden processes overt, and they encourage student observation and commentary. They also allow skill to build up bit by bit, yet permit participation even for the relatively unskilled, often as a result of the social sharing of tasks. Finally, the most successful programs are organized around particular bodies of knowledge and interpretation -- subject matters if you will -- rather than general abilities. (p. 18)

It would seem, then, that the group instruction in LVNYC is designed to assist students to develop literacy skills that can be used outside the program as well.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City addresses literacy as skills, tasks and practices, to varying degrees. Examining the relationship between skills use inside and outside the program, however, raises questions about literacy as critical reflection and social action. In other words, do students develop a perspective on the relationship between their skill development and larger social structures.

Talk inside the program focuses on individual achievement or individual issues and tutors see themselves as problem solvers rather than problem posers. This encourages a notion of literacy that remains on the level of individual achievement. Tutors can help students raise their concerns beyond their individual experiences, but in only one instance did we observe a tutor trying to raise larger questions; in the rest of the tutoring sessions we observed, personal stories were simply responded to as personal. Ms. Leach's story about a homeless woman on the street was met with compassion, but nobody raised questions about why there appears to be an increase in homelessness in New York City, for example. McLaren (1990) asserts that educators can help students ask those critical questions and connect their lives to larger patterns of struggle and social structure by "linking individual narratives of specific instances of suffering to an even larger historical framework in order to recover the social memory of awareness of other struggling or oppressed groups" (p. 26).

INSIDE AND PUBLIC: CELEBRATION OF LANGUAGE

Literacy Volunteers of New York City involves students inside the program in a number of activities in addition to direct instruction. These include publishing student writing in Center and program newsletters; events at which students read their writing to others in their Center or to participants in the overall program as well as their family and friends; media coverage of literacy and of the program in particular; involvement in tutor and student orientation and training; and local, state and national conferences. These activities often are in public situations; participation means that students' skills are open to the scrutiny of strangers. In addition, activities such as speaking to large groups and traveling on airplanes may be new; students look to each other for support as they take on these responsibilities. Activities in Centers feel public to many students because they often do not know the students with whom they share their Center. Sometimes there is a surface familiarity that comes from seeing others twice a week, sometimes for years. Often students do not know the names of students who are not in their groups. They also often do not know the names of their Center Director and Center Assistant or of tutors other than their own. Mr. Delisi, looking around the Center at the students in other groups, comments, "They don't know who we are. We know each other a little bit, but they're like in their own [world]." Mr. Walsh made a similar comment in another conversation. He was trying to refer to his Center Director, and could not remember her name. He comments, "I don't know anybody's name here -- only the faces. No one here seems to know anyone's name." Ms. Knowles stays in touch with two or three of her fellow group members from a previous group; it seems to be unusual, however, for group members to develop relationships outside of class, even though many students forge strong bonds in class. Mr. Delisi explains, "It's hard, because we all have to go to work, who's gotta go home, watch the kids, who's got a job, a second job. It's hard to get together.... I have two jobs. I can't."

The tutors feel that the time and organization of their space contributes to the kind of intergroup communication that develops. One tutor from a community daytime site says that, "We're pretty much all there at the same time so everybody more or less knows everybody else.... At some of the other sites, tutors [are] in and out, in and out, in and out, and it's a little bit difficult to touch base. Ours is like a little home group." Another tutor, who works at a corporate Center, says, "Our site is not that good at communication between groups. We are very good at communication within our own group, but I don't think we do a good job at all with communication between groups.... We got all these little dividers." Students feel some sense of comfort because they are inside the program; public situations nonetheless raise anxiety.

"We all got talent hidden inside": The Publishing Program

The publishing program is very meaningful to students; even students who left the program talk with pride about their published writing. Tutors play a major role in encouraging students to submit their writing for publication. Tutoring group members are aware of which newsletters or books contain group members' writings, and they can recite the events at which they or their fellow learners recited.

Publications are a kind of public situation, and some students struggle over their loss of anonymity. Ms. Higgins, for example, says that, "Someone discovered me. They read the little story that I have wrote and they liked it and so then after they read it they asked... was it okay for them to publish it? And, such as I am, I don't really go for my name being put in it." Ms. Higgins' primary focus now is on the fact that,

> It feels fantastic. It's a beautiful feeling. I just can't wait to have one in my hand and to see my name there in the book.... I gotta take some to my family.... It feels good to be selected, for them to want to even consider it, ot putting down something that I wrote in my very own words. They changed a little, but you can't really tell that they really changed the words, because it's all there, but it really feels good. I was up on Cloud 9 for a long time, calling and telling everybody, 'I'm being published,' you know.

Mr. Sikes "feel[s] real good that people around here are interested in my writing and want to read it." Mr. Shabazz knows how important feedback is, and he tries to respond to authors. He explains, "If we do know the person who wrote it, we congratulate him on the piece they write or we talk about it, 'What would make you write that,' you know, 'Did something happen to you,' something like that, you know." Indeed, Mr. Garcia's story was published in the Center newsletter and other students read it and told him, "'It was a very tough story about yourself, what you went through.'" However, although the story was about a family experience, Mr. Garcia did not share the story with his family.

Ms. Franklin, a former student whose writing was published, describes her slow acceptance of writing and its eventual importance to her:

> They have all of us write. And I mean you got to write... I mean I used to have to write every day I was there. 'I don't want to write. I want to know how to spell this.' 'Oh, it don't make no difference, Ilene, just write anything.' That's what [the staff] used to tell me.... 'I don't want to write.' 'That's good, that's fine.'.. and I say, 'Oh, I feel better, couldn't spell – my three words spelled right: and, is, it. (laughs) Then the next time, hey, oh, it just got better and better. And then when they told me I was a writer,.. now I never thought I was no writer. I mean, hey, sitting up in the house and not knowing nothing. Do you think I could learn to write a poem? Or write a story? My story would ever be in a book?... I ain't never think I would amount to doodly-squat. I'm proud of me and I did a lot of things and you know, right now I can go to my heaven and still be satisfied

> because I never expected none of this. And this thanks, and all of us say, they give us so much, and showing us respect for our own self, too. Respect for what we came through. Just a little thing that we thought we couldn't do, we can do it. I mean we all got talent hidden inside of us and we'll never know it until somebody bring it out.

However, Ms. Franklin says that now that she is out of the program, she is not writing any more, even though she, "means to."

Even though the newsletters are internal, they are public documents in a way, and raise issues for students about doing things inside or outside the program. Newsletters are accessible to readers outside the program and this seems to resonate with some students' sense of vulnerability. For example, Mr. Taylor explains,

> I'm embarrassed to be read by people outside. They can read good and I can't, you know. It don't feel right. So you see it's better [inside the Center] cause everybody's got the same problems... some [read] a little faster than you , some a little slower than you,.. you're here for the same purpose so you feel better. Nobody teasing you.

"Enough courage now": Performance

Performance, such as speaking on television or reading at a celebration, is an interesting combination of public and private. The situation is public in the case of television; celebrations at students' Centers are public as well, but differently so because they remain sheltered inside the program. Practice is public to the extent that students feel judged by the criteria of standard English usage, but private in that they are encouraged to express their own unique views and thoughts. When they are explicitly representing the program, however, such as when they are interviewed by the media as students of Literacy Volunteers of New York City, performance is public because students believe it is allowable to say some things but not others.

Ms. Knowles was asked to go on TV and declined at the time because, "I didn't want people to see me. I was still in the closet. I didn't want people to know. And [now] I'm not working, I'm out here, I don't care." On the other hand, Mr. Delisi agreed to be on the television show. He says that his family was happy to see him on television, and he felt, "Good -- I got it on video.... I was happy to show people in the world, to see it could be in the lunch room, it could be in a library, it could be anywhere -- there are people out there to help you." Mr. Delisi also shares his published writing with his friends and family. He is very sensitive, however, to feeling that they may think he is "showing off." He explains: "It's not right to show off. Help each other out but don't show off., cause it hurts them more.... It's not right to show off 'cause then you're feeling like they're stupid."

Mr. Shabazz does not want his name or picture published in the newspaper because, he says,

> I don't want to do nothing to lose this job because I know I'm going to have a hard time going out there to look for another job. Okay, so I just try my best for my picture or my name not to show up in any of the articles of these people or anything.... This job I'm at now, they buy all the newspaper you can think about.... Mostly everybody in my job knows I have some connection with Literacy Volunteers. They don't know what I'm doing, but they know I have connection with Literacy Volunteers.

When Mr. Shabazz asks for time off from work to attend conferences, for example, he explains that he is a volunteer for LVNYC. He continues, "I do volunteer for a lot of things, you know. I volunteer to work with the new students that come into the program, the new tutors. I volunteer my time to go to conferences, to make myself available to do more in the program."

Students also become involved in tutor and student orientation. Students may not be used to sharing their stories with strangers or speaking to groups other than their tutoring groups. It often is a reflection of the impact of the program when students volunteer at all; their ability to do well is further evidence of program effectiveness. Mr. Mangiapane describes his first experience talking to new tutors: "I told them I'm nervous. I told them about myself, what I do and how the program helped me and that I feel great and am able to read. I felt good that I was talking to them, you know, I had enough courage now to talk in front of people." Mr. Paynter, on the other hand, who is more invested in protecting his privacy, did not like the experience. He says he didn't like the way he was asked a lot of questions about himself and his goals. He sees the staff as always asking students to "do all these things." But, Mr. Paynter says, "I don't want to do them. I don't like talking to people." He also admits that being asked makes him feel good, "a little bit."

Mr. Delisi has talked with new students. He felt good because he felt he, "made them feel very, very comfortable and they started helping each other out -- and I was helping them.... And it made me feel more happy that I was doing that to them." He admits that,

> I was scared the first time I went there to talk to new students 'cause I was nervous, but they were scared, too. I made them comfortable and it felt so good. I felt like a teacher. I said, "Oh, God, this reminds me of something.... Back to school. I mean I was the teacher standing up, you know and they were asking me questions.... And I was talking to them and I built their confidence by applauding to them you know. I said you see you made it by writing this and I was applauding. They felt so happy they were applauding to each other and not to me.

Mr. Delisi admits that, "I choke up sometimes 'cause... [when] I'm in a group, I could talk, and when it gets too big, I get nervous. But then I'm starting to learn how to do that more -- to talk to a group more."

Individual Centers sometimes have small reading and writing celebrations in which students read their work to all of the students and tutors in the Center; students find these events supportive and exciting. Ms. Higgins explains:

> All of us write something and then we would get up there and read it to the whole group [in the Center].... It's not bad among just the people that are here, because all of us is just about in the same boat, so you don't feel bad about getting up and reading something and it's not so fantastic, because all of us who do it makes a mistake, so that learns us too,.. to try to put our nervousness aside, but sometimes you still be nervous, but you can get up and read it with the self-assurance that you're going to do it.

Ms. Higgins and Mr. Mangiapane believe that LVNYC sponsors these readings so that students will "come out of that shell" (Ms. Higgins); Mr. Mangiapane, in the same conversation, agrees: "Yeah, so you could come out of that shell and experience talking in front of other people like your group, so like in front of your family, be able to talk." And Ms. Higgins adds, "And to let other people know what's going on, how to express themselves and without being fearful to just step out." Ms. Lopez joins in, "There may be some new people here coming now and they don't know, they may be scared themselves, but if they see that she expressing her own feeling, they may relax a little bit and enjoy the program also."

Ms. Higgins explains that the experience is structured to reinforce good feelings: "You write a little note and say, 'That's good. That's okay. Keep the good work up.' Something to keep you encouraged to go on, okay. It's good to encourage yourself, but it's even better to hear somebody else telling you." And Ms. Higgins admits that, "I saves them." Mr. Delisi concurs. His first experience reading his writing at a Center event was very emotional for him:

> I felt like crying because they were listening to how I felt. Like my heart – a little door was opening, and the people were listening and they wrote little notes. I have it in my scrapbook.... And the people that was reading, I wrote to them... 'Good Luck, I think you're great! Keep up the good work! If you believe in yourself you could believe anything you could do.' Things like that.

Once a year the program holds a "Celebration," a major event in a New York City church at which students read their writing. Board members, staff, tutors, students, program supporters, friends and family members all come together to celebrate the work of new readers and new writers. Many students talk about this event very positively, although they admit that these public performances can be scary and difficult. Ms. Carón admits, "Sometime when I do that I was shaking. I was trying to read it and I couldn't read it, I was so nervous." Ms. Higgins agrees, "Sometimes you get up there, I say, I feel so nervous, I think it's going to come out in my voice, you know? But then they get up there, you say you're nervous, bear with me cause I'm nervous, you know, and after you done read they will get up there and encourage you and say, 'Oh, you didn't sound like you were nervous.'"

Travel is one of the major issues in participating in program activities or conferences. For example, one group said that travel to another part of New York City would be a problem, except for the one group member who happened to be experienced with that part of the city. And Ms. Swanson explains that she went to a national conference after saying, "'If one more person go from here, I will go.' So come to find out, I think it was five or six people was going, so I said, 'Yes I go.' I'm glad, because I enjoyed it." Mr. Walsh explains further,

> When they have different functions for people learning how to read and write, they tell us we could go, but if they don't make any arrangements that, you know, we can't do it. Most people here can't read. How are they going to find a way to go all the way to Boston?... If they could organize something like for all those who want to go, somebody could drive a car. Make some kind of arrangements or something so one person would know their way around, they could go.

Mr. Paynter also talks about wanting to attend a national conference, but he is afraid he would get on the wrong airplane.

Ms. Knowles found that attending a national conference was very supportive. She was surprised by the fact that so many students from so many places had so much in common with her: "You'd be surprised at the people that didn't have [literacy skills].... So nobody can't feel ashamed... 'cause all of them there for the same thing. So you feel comfortable, you feel free to speak your mind. And you tell them all about it." Ms. Knowles attended one conference at which she did not like the way she and other students were treated. Her response reflects her emerging confidence in herself as well as her understanding that writing is a source of power:

> They wanted to put us in the closet there, and I really got upset about it because I told her I was going to write a piece about it when I got back 'cause I didn't like the way they did. 'Cause we always go up and speak something,.. but this time they didn't want us to say nothing. They want us to just sit still.... So they had a big mess about it that night.... Because it's not right. We come all this way and we spent our money to come here and then they're going to let us sit down to stay in

> the closet.... I didn't come down there to be in no closet.... So they had changed it. So they said, 'Let the students be seen.'

Some students raise questions about the amount of time involved in participating in program activities other than tutoring. For example, one former student comments:

> [Students are] missing a lot of classes, they're pushed into doing things they're not prepared for, they don't know how to do them -- and we're using the student, we're exploiting them instead of what they really came there for -- to learn how to read and write. Nobody came to be on TV or to advertise this or to advertise that and many times they're asked to do things and they lose their jobs because of it.

Students talk about how participation in some of the public activities contributes to their general sense of confidence and increased feelings of self-esteem. Those findings are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary and Discussion

Students who participate in public situations inside the program are allowing their sense of LVNYC as a safe space to support a number of new practices. Speaking to a large group in this setting is a very different situation from speaking to other large groups. Although public, it retains the feeling of being inside, among one's friends and peers. Participation in the publishing program is extremely motivating and enhancing to students' self-concepts. It becomes problematic at the point that the products of publishing go outside; this is true of participation in media coverage as well.

The program's large celebration acts as a bridge between inside and outside. Carefully planned and orchestrated, it retains the supportive features of group interaction that typify inside the program. At the same time, it invites the outside in -- but a carefully selected sample of outside -- friends and kin; new readers and new writers know that these are persons who know about their struggles with literacy. They do not have to worry about managing the information in this setting.

CHAPTER 6. "A LOT OF THINGS THAT EVERYBODY ELSE DO": IMPACT ON LIFE OUTSIDE THE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

"In the beginning, you don't do it," Ms. Hobson says, candidly discussing the transition from developing skills inside the program to using them outside the program:

> And I don't care who could waltz in that door and they tell me they did it. I'll say you don't. Because you come to your tutor, and you cannot read very well, so you start off and then its hard when you sitting and your tutor is here. When you leave your tutor, you are not going home to say no words that you don't know. So you close that book.... But once you can pick that book up and read the first paragraph... and you skip two [lines] and you know two [lines]... you are so anxious to get to the other six. So that's how it continues.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City would like students to be able to use their skills outside the program, to have a positive impact on the quality of their daily lives. In this chapter we present a variety of private and public situations in which students use their developing literacy skills; the situations provide opportunity for exercising their skills; students believe that by using their skills, they continue to grow and learn.

Adult learners in LVNYC describe a wide range of changes in activities and relationships that are related to literacy at home, which is usually a private situation. In public situations students use their skills to deal with daily chores such as grocery shopping, banking, and public transportation, as well as in their jobs.

The final section of this chapter deals with changes in beliefs and feelings; it is organized around the concept of shame which is central to many students' narratives. It brings together general feelings of increased self-confidence and self-esteem that cut across the public and private, inside and outside situations that characterize students' lives.

OUTSIDE AND PRIVATE: NEW LITERACY PRACTICES AT HOME

Working full-time, raising a family and going to school are difficult under the best of conditions – and, unfortunately, most of the students we spoke with do not have the best of conditions. They are dealing with a variety of difficult problems that place additional demands on their time and energy. Students told us about being homeless, about being recovering alcoholics, about having to care for elderly parents and young children, about substance abuse and abusive spouses, about making ends meet on AFDC, about getting up before dawn and working far into the night, and about illness and dealing with the death of loved ones. One man described having to sit in his car to find a quiet place to read and write. Nonetheless, they push themselves to come; as one young woman says, "The hardest thing is making the effort. I mean, because when you work for money you start work at 8:00.... You're tired, you know, and you might say, 'I'm tired. I'm not going to school tonight.' But you make the effort even though you're tired, you make the effort and you still come here and you learn."

"Doing more better now": Changes in Lifestyle

LVNYC students believe that their progress will depend, partly, on the amount of time and energy they invest in learning. This means that they have to practice their new skills all the time -- not just when they are in tutoring sessions. Some tutors ask students to do specific homework assignments; others spend time helping students identify existing opportunities for practice in their daily lives. Mr. Delisi describes how he is incorporating literacy into his time at home: "I read a book at night time or if I got an idea, I write it, I'm starting to write, looking in a dictionary -- I swear I never looked in a dictionary 'cause it gets you aggravated 'cause of little words you know, you look, and when you miss that word you get aggravated. You just, you curse yourself out, you wanna throw the book out the window. But now it's different." Right now, Mr. Delisi's entire lifestyle is changing, and literacy is a big part of the change; he explains:

> What I would have done before if I didn't come to the Program?... I would have gone out and watched, or go upstate, go down to Manhattan, go to South Street Seaport -- I would have gone out. I wouldn't have stayed home.... [Now] I stay home to write.... I'm doing more better now than I was before. I'm communicating with a lot of people now than before. When somebody talks to me, I listen, I don't turn around.

Mr. Delisi continues: "I'm going on vacation. This is the first time I'm going away by myself. First time I went in and booked something and, you know, did it on my own." And Ms. Altman feels good "because now I can pick up a book and I can just go right through it. You know, the words just come to me like that (snapping her fingers) and with me, I like reading the Bible and that was my goal to read the Bible.... I am really reading the Bible very good."

Other students also attest to the increased time they now spend at home reading and writing. For example, Mr. Guerrero explains,

> I'm here to learn how to read and write, so I pay attention and try to open a book more. And, you know, I'm more aware of what I have to do, you know.... I have to do whatever assignment I have, you know, and that's why it's more, a little more than what I did before I got in the program. Before I got in the program I didn't do much reading at all -- except signs, I always tried to read a sign.

And Mr. Hopps now spends his leisure time reading and writing: "Sometime you don't have anything to do or know where to go and, you know, you'll take up a book and you can read, or you can decide to write something.... And when you put it on the paper and you see that it's O.K. for you, you know that you done something for yourself. So you're not just doing it for someone else."

But many students also express frustration about their inability to spend more time at home reading and writing. Ms. Higgins explains that: "When I get home, I cook, I eat. By that time all my tiredness have fall down on me. I hit the bed. If I pick up a book, I'm gone." She says, "What reading I do is mostly on the subways." Ms. Carón agrees, "It's hard for me to get home to get a book to read or write something, 'cause because sometime I get home late and you couldn't open a book, you're so tired, and I just eat something and really pass out. If you trying to read something like that, you falling asleep." On her days off, however, Ms. Carón often stays home listening to tapes her tutor makes for her and following the text in her book.

Children are described often as a source of distraction and as a competing responsibility. Some parents are able to involve their children in ways that are mutually beneficial, however. For example, Mr. Ramsey's children are usually,

> running around but I'll get a plan for them and it's working, which I got a little what you call office in my bedroom, a table there, a typewriter, and what I do, I get everybody together, which is two kids there, one is 5 and one is 4 and a half, so what I did was everybody pick up the book and while I'm teaching them the little that I know in this stage, in the same time I'm learning something too. It works out – they are concentrating and they teach me too. We working like a little group right there.

Ms. Lopez and her husband Manuel create a literacy-rich environment in which children and adults are involved in various literacy activities. While in some homes we found little evidence of reading or writing materials, in Ms. Lopez's home books were abundant. Books for children and adults spilled out of bookcases and crates in every room of the house -- including the bathroom. There was also an encyclopedia in the living room. Ms. Lopez is firm with her children about the value of reading. She is proud that,

> I make them read a lot. What I do is -- I practice it myself, too -- I shut off the TV. They cannot see it for an hour unless they have read a book. Like today the TV has not been on at all... because I prefer reading is more important than watching a crazy TV... unless it's an interesting and educational program. And I screen everything they see.

Ms. Lopez and her daughter help each other study, as her daughter explains: "She made a deal with me. She helped me with my social studies and I helped her with the driving test. I would ask her questions.... And then she'd ask me questions.... So we were both learning. And it worked so good 'cause she likes math and I hate math. She hates social studies and I like social studies." Ms. Lopez's family all get involved in playing word games that provide opportunities for the entire family to have fun together as they continue developing their skills. For example, Mr. Lopez explains: "One time we were on the way to Florida. We had to find certain letters in sequence or a word in sequence as we went along. And somebody said, 'Oh okay I found the o.' And the next person, the r – gotta look for the r." Ms. Lopez also identifies Monopoly and Life as reading games; she used to have to ask her family for help reading the board and cards, but now she can do it herself. And Mr. Lopez recounts that, "We used to set time aside before just so I could read out loud. Sometimes I have a few Agatha Christie mysteries or something like that and we read one after the other and then we talk about it, like who do you think did it? Why do you think he did it?"

Reading at home sometimes means reading the labels of cans and directions on the laundry detergent – no opportunity to read is too small when practice time is at such a premium. In fact, some students talk about reading the ads on the television for practice. Students find it is important to keep on trying: "pushing it one word or two words keeps that mind always focused on words and knowing more" (Mr. Ramsey).

Many students discuss trying to read the newspaper more often, and some find that watching the news on television provides some frame of reference -- background information -- that makes it easier to deal with the newspaper. Mr. Garcia is particularly interested in current events: "I pick a newspaper.... What's going on in space, in sports, politics, you know, I say, hey, you know, it's great. This person who won the world series, who won the superbowl, you know, things like that are things what's happening." Ms. Franklin's new ability to read the newspaper has substantial social implications, as well. She explains:

> I had a girlfriend, she read the news all the time, and I looked at the news. So just 'cause I say Brokaw say something, she would say, 'But it wasn't in the news like that.' Well, I can't contradict her because I didn't read the newspaper. But now I can read the newspaper. I say, well, if this person say this and the news people say this, I say all of them have got a different story.... And you can say it now. But before I couldn't say it. I could just look at them silly: 'But I learned it on TV.' That's the only thing I did, heard on TV. Now I can say I read it, too. I might not could read all the words but I read it, right?

A number of students talk about reading and writing letters. Ms. Higgins, for example, used to call down South, but now she says, "I will challenge myself to write and tell them what I'm saying instead of just going down and just call them on the phone. I'll put it on the paper now and write it out, you know, and I like that." Often students will bring reading or writing projects in to their groups for assistance. For example, Mr. Shabazz' wanted to write to his sister; he is proud that, "Only a few words the tutor helped me to spell and that was it you know, and they all were proud of me when I wrote that letter." And Mr. Mangiapane was surprised when, "One of my granddaughters gave me a birthday card and usually my wife reads it and I realized I could read my own birthday card. I read it, it was great!" Ms. Knowles also has been able to realize a dream: "I always wanted to write my mother a letter myself, myself.... It was something I wanted to tell her.... So with help I wrote that piece. She appreciated it, you know. I was glad I got it to her before, she's senile now, you know.... But she was so happy."

Some students develop their own writing systems, a kind of ultimate private literacy practice. For example, Mr. Guerrero developed a writing system for keeping track of appointments; he explains: "Maybe I might just put initials and all; maybe something that I do constantly I might know how to spell some of it.... I know what I'm going to write, I'm going to write in my own way."

The issue of reading and writing at home is more complex than simply whether or not a student has the quiet time and the energy after a long work day. It also has to do with the students' lives at home -- their social networks, the relationships they have established with their family and friends. **Increasing the amount of reading and writing they do at home means that students have to renegotiate many of the relationships that are central to their lives.** Usually students' family members help them with literacy tasks; this kind of help is part of the larger networks of relationships among students and their kin. Students' families also help out with their school work. But no matter how helpful your friends and family are, Ms. Sharpe asserts, "You can't depend on them all the time."

Everyone has someone who can help with reading and writing tasks at home such as paying bills and responding to mail; sometimes students even use the program to help them with these tasks. Mr. Taylor, for example, brings in mail with which he needs assistance, and other students have brought in job applications or voter registration forms. But reading and writing for their own learning is more complicated. Mail gets to be relatively predictable; bills always have the amount in the same place, application forms tend to ask for the predictable name, address, and so on. Public practices, precisely because they are judged by a set of norms and standards, are predictable and students can become become relatively independent pretty quickly.

Reading and writing for learning, however, is both not predictable and must be done on a regular basis, so it places new demands on relationships with helpers and new significance on the role reading and writing play in that relationship. These are private practices that are defined by the student more than by the demand of the task. As such, students often have more control constructing these practices, but they must place more reliance on their skills and on their helpers as well. This can cause problems. For example, Mr. Walsh feels that when he reads outside the program, he sometimes gets stuck on a word and then "mixes everything up." His girlfriend is the main person who helps him with his reading. When they are not getting along well and see each other less often, his reading suffers as well. Students told us over and over again about how their involvement in reading and writing tasks at home is influenced by and has an impact on their existing social relationships.

Mr. Paynter teaches us about what this really means when he talks about his struggle to increase his reading and writing activities at home. His story is presented in detail because it is important to understand in some complexity the impact on Mr. Paynter's private life of developing literacy skills. Mr. Paynter is the youngest child in a large family; he lost his father when he was very young and he became used to depending on his mother and sisters. Sometimes Mr. Paynter manipulated situations so that he would not be alone. He explains:

> Sometime I used to like ask because of my reading. You know sometime I put that in the way.... Like sometime if I knew how to do it, I would act like I couldn't do it.... And they would like come with me or show me.... 'Cause I never really used to do things on my own. I always have someone there with me or someone coming with me.... It's like I'm always used to having someone there who I could depend on.

Only Mr. Paynter's immediate family know about his literacy problems; he has not shared this information with any of his friends or extended family. Mr. Paynter's shame runs deep; he explains: "I always thought I couldn't read nothing and I didn't know no words, so I always felt like I was a dummy. And I didn't want to be with nobody or see nobody 'cause I used to feel like I was stupid, and nobody likes me and I don't want to be bothered with nobody." Mr. Paynter summarizes his feeling about friends: "I would always be scared to get too close to a friend because I don't want them to start asking me questions."

A few years ago Mr. Paynter,

> start[ed] talking to [a counselor] and so that's when I was telling him I'm going to kill myself and I don't want to live.... Then he's always saying, 'Well, you know, thinking about it could help a lot because you might look at it another way. So I started looking at it different ways. Thinking about what I got and what not... and I say, 'Yeah, I do got a lot of things.' So then I stopped thinking about killing myself.

Slowly, Mr. Paynter has been changing his life since that time. He is African American, in his early twenties and lives with his family, but he has his own room and his own telephone. He explains that, "It's like I'm trying to do different things to see could I do it. So far I've been doing a lot of things that everybody else do." He explains further,

> I think I depend on myself a lot now. And I do most everything on my own.... I go buy food by myself.... I cook for myself now. I iron my own clothes.... I got a telephone so now I ask my sister show me how much it costs and what I'm supposed to pay for and what not.... And all that's pretty easy. And see I thought it was hard to do, real hard to do. And sometime my mother tell me to go to the cash check place and get a money order. I didn't want to do that 'cause I thought I couldn't. But that was easy.... And the only thing I ain't tried yet is the gas, the light bill.... I want to try that one.

And Mr. Paynter's participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City requires that he take the train; as a result, he explains, "I'm not afraid to get on the train now or getting on the bus. I know my way a little bit. I'm not scared or frightened anymore. "

"But the one thing I'm still kind of scared of," Mr. Paynter continues, "is I don't tell nobody that I can't read, but it's like certain people I want to tell but I just can't tell them.... And then if I tell them – then they might treat me different." His pain about his friendships and secrets is evident: "It's like I'm just waiting for them to say, 'Can you read, I'm not gonna make fun of you. I'm your friend and you could tell me what' -- they ain't no never came out and said nothing like that.... It's like I want them to know but it's just that I want them to tell me. Instead of for me to tell them." And when LVNYC asked if a photographer could come to his job, Mr. Paynter said, "I'll have to find something to tell them [at work] -- make up some lie to tell them" because he does not want the people at work to know about his involvement in a literacy program.

All of the ways in which Mr. Paynter feels the impact of his participation in LVNYC and his skill development have attendant changes in his relationships with his family and friends. Mr. Paynter spends less time than he used to with his friends; he attributes this change to him and his friends "going our different ways." And now that he is going to school, he doesn't want people asking him "a whole bunch of questions." He has told some people that he is in school for computers; when they ask him questions, he shies away from the relationship. Mr. Paynter's mother explains, "He'll be with [a friend] a long time and then he'll start to pull out, you know? I don't think he want them to find out that he can't read."

Mr. Paynter's relationship with his brother has changed positively. In the past, Mr. Paynter recalls, "My brother used to tease me and say, 'Well at least I can read. ... And he used to say, 'Try, try, try. You never try.' I used to always tell him, 'I do try but you just don't be around when I be trying.'... And we used to always fight and what not." Now, however, Mr. Paynter says, "He see that I'm trying.... So now we speak to one another, so that helps." Mr. Paynter's relationship with his mother has changed as well; she claims: "I don't go anywhere with him now and he does all that by hisself now.... 'Cause I used to have to go everywhere with him cause he was afraid to go.... I'm glad he learned!" And Mr. Paynter's sister mentions that he shares his writing sometimes: "Like times before, the work he did, he didn't like no one to see it. [Now] he's letting someone read it, or see what he's done -- that is a change."

But Mr. Paynter says that he does not read and write at home -- meaning that he does not read books or write other than to fill in bills. At first, Mr. Paynter says that it is simply too noisy to read where he lives, particularly with his two young nieces in the house. But he adds that sometimes his brother's girlfriend comes to the house as well, and, he explains, "I don't want her to know what I'm doing." Mr. Paynter also explains that he does not write at home because he, "needed someone there to help me with the words, with the spelling -- because I might not know how to spell the words." In class he will write down one letter, write a line and go on, asking his tutor how to spell the word later. But Mr. Paynter feels that "In school, it's OK [to ask for help] because I know I need help," he does not want to have to ask for help at home constantly.

This reticence is based partly on Mr. Paynter's experience. For example, he tells of asking one of his sisters for help. It's frustrating because she "like to holler." He explains:

> If I don't know it, [she'll say], 'Try.' I say, 'I already tried. Now either tell me the word or don't.' So like a lot of the time, she think it's like easy – but trying to tell someone who knows how to read to someone who don't know how to read that it's easy, it's not.... And so it's like you constantly argue back and forth with them.... So I just say, 'Forget it.'

The tensions Mr. Paynter feels are deeply rooted. His relationships with his family are shifting slowly as he begins doing some new things that require literacy skills; at the same time, Mr. Paynter remains unwilling to let his friends know about his literacy problem. He is making many changes and using his developing literacy skills in many new ways but he is unwilling to let other people be a part of his literacy skill development on an ongoing basis – this seems to feel too public to him. He remains afraid of close relationships, but the way this manifests itself to LVNYC is in his negative response to questions about doing regular homework.

With no formal counseling available, assistance with time management is the main way we observed Literacy Volunteers of New York City trying to help students incorporate more reading and writing into their daily lives. This implies that when students do not do homework it is because they have not "found the time" or are unmotivated. From the discussion above, however, it should be clear that scheduling is actually only one small thread in the complex weave of relationships, prior history, self-concept, resources and responsibilities that influence the extent to which students make the kind of lifestyle changes that might enable faster progress through the program.

"I do for myself": Changes in Relationships

The impact of participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City appears to manifest itself as a result of students practicing their skills at home (e.g., doing homework, writing, reading books) and applying their skills to do existing tasks in new ways or to do new tasks. In almost all cases these activities entail some changes in interpersonal relationships, either because students' needs for help change or because they are allocating their time differently. Some students are able to involve their entire households in their continuing learning. These students are not as concerned about the distinction between public and private within the private domain -- they have decided to be open with everyone who is usually around them.

Ms. Lopez, for example, reflects on the changes her five children and her husband have seen:

> Before I didn't know how to read a word. My kids would come to me... and ask how to spell this, how do you read this and I had to help them with homework and I didn't know how to do it. Lately I've learned to read and I teach the Bible in Sunday school.... Also, my own kids, I can sit down and read them stories.... Before, forget it, I used to go crazy trying to figure it out, 'Go to Daddy, go to this kid or that person.' Now I don't have to worry about it. If I don't know it, they help me. You know, cause my kids, one of them is in junior high school, the others are in public school, but they all work together. And my husband's very proud of me. I was able to write my own first postcard for him so, I wrote him a little story about myself.

Mr. and Ms. Lopez's oldest child, Natalie, is in the eighth grade. Her relationship with her mother is changing: "She doesn't have to wake me up at night and say, 'How do you spell 'haircut'?' OK, but now she's spelling things on her own. Now you can see a big difference." Natalie also sees lessons about parenting: "She tells me, 'Oh, don't ever push your kids aside, always be able to help them out,' and she gives me examples. And... when I talk to her, I'm thinking when I grow up I'm going... to make sure [my kids] have a dictionary in their room and stuff, and I'm always going to help them."

Ms. Lopez's learning also has had an impact on her nephew who was left back in kindergarten twice because he wasn't developing the skills needed in first grade. Ms. Lopez started working with him this year when he was living with her family, imitating the way she was learning:

> I started playing little games with him and gave him spelling words, and then I showed them that – I took the word cat and I took the "at" and I added all different kinds of words to it and how they made that sound. And then I gave him spelling words. And he had to spell them and every day he had to write them four times every day and then keep writing them and saying them, writing them and saying them. He learned how to read. Now he's in first grade.... His reading has gotten so good and he's really happy because now he's not getting left back. He's going back to his regular grade that he was supposed to be.

Mr. Lopez has felt the impact of Maria's changes as well. He has been ill and on heavy medication lately that affects his memory; it's been very upsetting for him and the family. Watching Ms. Lopez, he says, "has made me decide to try to push myself a little harder also.... I've been trying to work my way back. So it's helping my esteem, too."

Ms. Lopez's relationships with her neighbors have changed as well; she explains:

> This is a guy, he lives right here on XX Street, he quit school when he was in the fourth grade or fifth grade, and now he's got a reading problem. He doesn't know how to read at all. So I've been talking to him about the program and I gave him some books to read and I told him I help him out with his reading.... I felt good, too, because I'm helping somebody.

And another friend, "...every time she needs an application filled out from public assistance or food stamps, she come to me now and ask me to help her fill it out. And sometimes I used to ask Natalie some of the questions, but not any more."

Some students find that there is a general impact on their relationships, like Mr. Delisi describes:

> When I started this program, when I sat down with people and I heard what some of these... students have -- you know, who's got a better job, who's got this, who's got that, you know -- that scares you, that scares me. And then when they say they have more than you and you have nothing to show, that scares you.... But I don't get scared no more 'cause like I'm doing it. I'm going on vacation. I'm going here. I'm helping friends out. I'm listening to what people got to say.

Mr. Delisi's best friend Mr. Bartolo supports Mr. Delisi through his growth and change. As Mr. Delisi's skills develop, Mr. Bartolo develops a new respect for his friend's abilities:

> This is a place where he comes, he spends his time, he learns new things and he's happy when he comes home. He says, 'Hey, I wrote this story. What do you think?' I say, 'It sucks.' (Laughter) No, I say, 'It's good.'... One time he wrote something and I says, 'Larry, you wrote this? You could help me. You don't need to go down there no more. You could help me.' I told him.... He says, "But wait,... let me show you what I did." So he showed me his work and [how] he corrected it.... And I said it, 'Larry, if you do this, you could teach me.'

Mr. Bartolo continues, musing about changes in his relationship with Mr. Delisi: "Well it became a lot stronger in a way. And then in another way, I wanted to break the chain -- I wanted him to do things more on his own." Mr. Bartolo describes how Mr. Delisi used to have a block about getting close to people, but, "now he doesn't have to put up that block no more because now he's seen that he could do it. He did it with his weight, his reading, his application process. But the relationship with me and him is still the same as it was. It's just that now he's doing more things on his own."

Mr. Hopps also speaks powerfully about the change in his relationship with his son:

> Now I can help him with some of his homework, even though I don't understand all of his homework.... I find it very, very good to see he's happy. And before, he asked a question, I used to send him to his mother.... And it is good to be involved in his life where he is learning and, well, he asks me a question now all the time so that also gives me a big improvement. Because it's the same thing I'm trying to learn, and he's trying to learn so therefore we are trying to work together.

Some students describe how their friends show an interest in their work. In contrast to simply filling in workbook sheets, these new writers produce literature that can help sustain relationships with friends and family that support a students' involvement. For example, with some pride Mr. Shabazz describes how his best friend comes to visit and asks, "Well, how you doing in school? What you writing about?" Other students, however, find that some friends are simply not supportive; one student explains that she no longer spends time with her old friends because, "those people are going nowhere and have nothing to offer. " They call her "unsociable" and "stuck up," but she remains committed to her goals of learning to read and write. And Mr. Taylor says that he still tells nobody about his involvement in the program, even after eight years.

Ms. Leach also is in the process of changing her lifestyle and, therefore, her relationships. She explains,

> I see a lot of my friends doing the same old things year after year and I'm not into that really no more. I used to get high, go to parties, you know, do all those things, but now my life has changed.... I stay really more to myself than with my friends... and now I feel good about myself. Because by getting up and going to work every morning -- I have a lot of stuff to do, really, to take care of, because I'm paying my own insurance, paying my telephone bill, I buy my own clothes, you know, and whatever I need, you know, I do for myself. I don't ask anybody for nothing.... I go work-out. So I try to do things that keep myself busy instead of wanting to be around my friends because, I mean, they can't do anything that's going to really make me happy. We're still friends, but it's just that we not that close as we used to be by hanging around each other everyday.... I can't let nothing stop me.... They even noticed that where I don't be around them no more. I don't do the things that they do."

Some of the students we spoke with had difficult relationships with their families prior to coming to the program; however, now they feel supported in their efforts to change. For example, Mr. Shabazz explains that his family "used to look down on me, you know, because I had the experience of my family calling me stupid.... and that really hurt.... [Now] one of my Aunts, she had told me, she say, 'I'm really happy because you finally made that step in life.'"

Students also describe themselves as "talking better," another way in which their relationships with others are changing. For example, Ms. Walston sees progress, "because I'm beginning to be able to explain myself more... When you read out loud to the others that helps you [be more comfortable talking to others]." Mr. Mangiapane sees a general change in how he interacts with other people as well:

> I have more confidence in myself than I ever did. I go places now which I wouldn't have done before. You feel better. You get in. You mingle in the conversation with people.... The other day I got caught in a jam.... I thought it was two people -- in fact there was a whole room of tutors, trainees. Boy, did I want to run back out again, but I had already committed myself -- but I didn't do bad.

Ms. Karras simply attests: "I did change ....I used to be real shy... I used to do nothing in front of nobody and now I do." And Ms. Alvarez testifies:

> I'm learning how to speak up. Sometime like I have a tendency to keep my mouth shut about life. So now I'm starting more to open up my mouth about this, that, the other thing. [My fiancé] and I got into an argument,.. and he was surprised when I started shooting off at the mouth (laughs). He just stood shocked, you know. He said, 'You see , I told you, from now on, that you're going to have to speak. Don't be afraid of anything or what you know or be afraid to speak my mind.' That's good.

Summary and Discussion

The types of activities in which students engage is consistent with those identified by Heath (1983) in her study of two communities in the Carolinas. Heath lists the following types of uses of reading (p. 258):

- Instrumental: Students referred to reading labels, bills, checks, and other materials to deal with practical, everyday tasks;
- News: Students talked about reading newspapers as well as reading letters to get information about things happening elsewhere;

- Recreational: Students described reading leisure-related sections of the newspaper, planning trips, and reading for pleasure;
- Critical/educational: Students talked about reading different versions of a similar news story, or comparing the newspaper to the television accounts; students also read the Bible and non-fiction books;
- Social-interaction: Students were excited about being able to read and write cards and letters;
- Confirmational: This is the only one of Heath's categories in which we did not get data. It includes, "reading to check or confirm facts or beliefs often from archival materials stored and retrieved only on special occasions" (p. 258). This includes documents such as wills and birth certificates.

Heath also describes types of uses of writing in the home which are useful as well as a way to organize our thinking about the impact of literacy skills in private situations (p. 259).

- Memory aids: Students described writing lists and making notes about appointments;
- Reinforcement or substitutes for oral messages: Students talked about sending letters, postcards and notes;
- Social-interactional: Students talked about doing some literacy activities together as a family, or parents discussed working with their children;
- Financial: This moves into the public realm more than private, although students talk about writing checks to pay bills at home;
- Expository: Students talked about beginning to write for pleasure, at home.

While home usually is a private situation, many of these practices have both private and public aspects. For example, instrumental reading often is public; adults must have access to socially agreed upon meanings for things like directions and labels. Mr. Guerrero's use of his own symbol system to remember appointments, however, is a private practice for instrumental purposes. Similarly, when students send a personal note to a son or daughter living at a distance to reinforce a telephone conversation, that is a private practice. When the note is written to the child's fourth grade teacher to substantiate a telephone conversation about the child's absence from school, it is public practice.

The impact of new skills on private lives that was the most widespread among the students who participated in this study was on public literacy practices such as paying bills that require some initial assistance but become relatively predictable. All students experience some change in their interpersonal relationships, depending on the extent to which they previously had assistance with tasks that they are doing independently now, or the extent to which they involve others in new tasks. Students differ at the point where they think about involving new people in supporting their skill development or application, or when they think about allowing new people to know about their literacy skills problems. This is an important point; it places relationships at the center of our thinking about how to help students move their learning from the classroom into their homes. Students' experience of changes in their relationships is consistent with Fingeret's (1983) research and with Ziegahn's (1990) work. These studies show how relationships are central to adults' lives and, therefore, to their learning literacy skills. If we think of literacy as social practices, it is clear that situated relationships both influence and are influenced by literacy skills.

The relationships established in the literacy program are a source of psychological support for students; they can bring tasks from home into class and they know the program is a place they can feel accepted. Those relationships do not transfer however; students do not develop friendships with each other on the outside and feel limited to their pre-existing social networks when not in class. The situations inside and outside the program are fundamentally different because the nature and source of the relationships in each situation are different, giving rise to different literacy practices and choices.

OUTSIDE AND PUBLIC: READING THE WORLD

A few students use their new skills openly in public situations, getting involved in new activities in their communities. For example, Ms. Rourke is volunteering in her local library. She works with five-year-old children who are learning simple reading and writing skills through nursery rhymes; "They're so little, it's easy for me to volunteer my time to help them because these things I already know, so it's not a problem.... I feel very comfortable with that," she explains. This kind of public literacy practice in public situations is unusual, however.

There are numerous ways in which students engage in literacy practices in public situations in new ways; four environments are consistently discussed by the students participating in this evaluation: jobs (which we are classifying as public because most students have little or no control over who observes them at work), banks, public transportation, and grocery stores. Print in the public environment provides many opportunities for learners to practice their skills and discover change. For example, Mr. Ramsey says, "One day I was reading a piece of poster and I read it out and I said to myself, 'You improve a lot.'" Ms. Sharpe also describes a change in her interaction with her everyday environment: "When I see signs or something up on the street, I read them, or I stop and I read the sign. Or when I get up on the buses and I notice that there's other signs on that bus, when I sit down, I look at the sign, I read it. Before time, I couldn't do that."

"I'm a human being": Jobs

Many students felt held back in the past because of their literacy skills. For example, Ms. Knowles recalls that, "When a position would come up for me to take it because I was the seniorest, I... refused it because I was afraid sometime it would be writing and I couldn't do it. So I would always stay in the background and let somebody else take it." Ms. Lopez was offered a job but waited two months to follow it up, "because I was scared. I didn't know if I could handle -- you know because I know if you work in a daycare center you got to do a lot of reading and writing and... I was always scared to take that chance."

The students who spoke with us said that they deal with the literacy demands of their jobs through familiarity and help from coworkers. As Mr. Guerrero explains, "By looking at it all the time I really memorize it... [and] I pay a lot of attention... in the training classes that they give you, when they speak to you." He adds, with pride, "I could memorize a lot you know -- especially if I'm interested in it." Mr. Mangiapane also speaks of his job competence. He had to stop working in construction after thirty years because of a heart attack. He remembers,

> You go in with a crew and you just do your job. And you don't have to read on most of the jobs you do.... And I never took on a foreman's job because I was unable to fill out all the forms.... It's all common knowledge after you're on the job long enough, you know. If I could've read I could have been superintendent cause I would have gone up the ladder. I was good at whatever I did.

Most students have jobs that require no or minimal literacy skills. They are concerned about their co-workers or employers learning about their poor literacy skills because they believe it will affect how they are viewed -- their social status. Some students say that involvement in LVNYC can be problematic because people ask questions about where they are going, or they are included in mass media publicity that compromises their privacy. These are issues for their private lives as well, but adult learners often feel particularly vulnerable at work.

A few students attest to the positive impact their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City has had on their work. Since students' skills remain relatively low in relation to demands of higher level jobs, most of the impact has to do with small tasks, such as reading labels or street signs, and with a new sense of competence and confidence. For example, Mr. Hopps has to deal with a lot of handwritten orders in his job and he declares that, "coming here has helped me a lot to recognize a lot of words, you know, because before, sometimes, the only kind of word most of the time I would be able to understand is those what you write or type off a typewriter... but writing with a pen --... Coming here help me to recognize a lot of words in the things that I do."

Ms. Lopez has embraced change at her job at a daycare center with the same zest with which she approaches her family, but she still has not admitted to her boss and coworkers that she is in a literacy program -- she has told them she is preparing for her GED. She describes a host of changes in her relationship to literacy practices at work as she becomes more capable and confident of her literacy skills. For example, she explains that,

> If a kid gets hurt, I have to fill out a report and that's always embarrassing because I can't write every word that happens to that child. So, what I try to do, I try to pick out the words I know and then when I get home I fill it out. I'm not supposed to, but I'll take the form home and break it down myself, but I'll make sure I give the report to somebody, you know, let them know this child got hurt and let the other person fill it out and then I'd go home and practice the writing it myself. Now, I don't have to do that that much because I'm learning how to do it on my own. In the beginning, it was so embarrassing.

Ms. Lopez describes herself as "taking more chances now." She tells us that yesterday she was told to

> ask the kids to think what they saw in the park and then you have to write it down. So I ask [the teacher], 'There's going to be some words that I don't know how to spell.' She goes, just put a line and I'll figure it out on my own. So sure enough I was able to do it. I did. So that was yesterday. And I felt pretty good. And the teacher understood everything I wrote.... There was only maybe two words I couldn't spell. So she was really proud. I felt good, too.

Ms. Lopez believes that six months ago, "I would have just told her no, it would be too much. I would have tried to figure out a way how to get around it. But now I can see that I can try, you know, and release that fear. Fear is not going to help you. It's just going to stop you from getting what you really want."

Mr. Delisi's change in confidence and attitudes also has manifested itself at work. This impact is not one of using literacy skills in new ways, but a deeper consequence of the larger process of change in which Mr. Delisi has been engaged: "I stick up for my fellow workers and me [now], like talking to my foreman or my superiors.... Before, I keep my mouth shut because I want to go farther at my job.... [Now I feel that] if you don't speak up, they're gonna walk all over you. So I speak up for me and the people I care [about]." How is that connected to his new skills and involvement in the program? "Because I'm a human being, not to be treated like a dog or somebody low, a low person. If you can't treat me like a person, I shouldn't treat you like a boss. That's what I feel."

Tutors' support has been important to students as well. For example, Mr. Paynter's tutor helped him get a job. It has been important for him because, he explains, "I always felt that I couldn't work because I couldn't read. But I've found that's not true because I'm working now, and I still can't read that well." Ms. Leach wants to get another job, one with benefits and one in which she feels more appreciated than she does now. Discussions with her tutor have influenced how she thinks about those possibilities, as she explains: "I figured the only type of job that I could have gotten is dealing with food service and me not knowing that I can go out there and get other jobs.... [My tutor] was telling me that I can be able to work in the mailroom, other places besides working in a fast food restaurant and being a literacy person.... [She] encouraged me more."

"I'm not scared any more": Public Transportation

A number of students assert that their skill development has had an impact on their general sense of mobility. They feel more confident to try going to new places, and their skills support reading street signs now, for example. It is still not easy, though; Natalie describes a recent incident in which she and her mother, Ms. Lopez, were trying to get to a party: "They give her an address- and she didn't know exactly how to read it but she was good. You know how you take the kid's puzzles and you match the things? She was matching the name. She'd look, 'Well, is this it? No', and she'd keep walking. And I was like, 'I don't believe this.'... And she got there and I was shocked."

For most students the main issue is maneuvering through the maze of the public transportation system, and the problems are complex. When someone has poor literacy skills, mobility in this urban environment seems to result from a combination of experience, careful observation, and assistance. Ms. Walston's experience, for example, is typical: "My daughter calls the transit authorities and... you give them the address and they give you what bus to take or what train to take." When asked if she can tell when she has reached her stop, Ms. Walston replies: "Yes, as long as she writes it down for me. But I know about Manhattan because I was born in Manhattan." Mr. Paynter felt less trusting of directions from others: "I was always scared of getting lost on the train 'cause people giving you all different kinds of directions and you still end up being lost."

Reading the signs is one of the biggest barriers. For example, Mr. Shabazz explains that he always could go places, but before he could read the signs, "instead of taking me ten minutes to find the place, it would take me an hour or a half-hour to find the place, you know." Mr. Paynter explains that his group helped him,

> with the signs and what not, uptown, downtown.... they tell me the sign, you go up and downtown and you catch the 1 (train) and you'll see "1", it'll say going downtown, and stuff like that. 'Cause I always felt scared being on the train. I might get off at the wrong stop, I'm gonna get lost, I'm not going to know how to get back home. You know I be worrying about that.

In addition, some places are easier to travel in, like Manhattan, and others more difficult, like the Bronx, because in the Bronx, Ms. Lopez explains, "everything is reading -- there's no numbers."

There are also problems connected to finding your destination once you get out of the train station. Ms. Franklin is pleased that she now can read addresses rather than memorizing landmarks. For example, she says, "I know where I'm coming at, you know. I didn't have to look at this here building and know it. I know this is Avenue of America, 121 Avenue of America." When the interviewer asked her, "And you didn't know how to do that before?" Ms. Franklin carefully replies: "I knew how to do it, but I had to tell by a tree or a building."

One tutoring group got very involved in a discussion about how much easier it was to use the trains now that their skills were improving. Mr. Hopps began explaining the difficulties of finding the final destination: "You have to walk up to someone and say, 'Excuse me, if you could direct me to someplace' you like to go. They look at you like you're ready to mug them or something. but most of the time you're just asking for directions.... You look like you're begging or whatever." Mr. Delisi adds to the same conversation, "They give you a down look, like, 'Who the hell are you? Don't come near me.'" And, Mr. Hopps continues, "They say, 'Go down the block, you'll see it.' And you ask them, 'Sir, how many blocks?' They say, 'Down the block.' At which point Ms. Sharpe joins the conversation, saying, "Down the block where? I mean, there are so many blocks." At which point the entire group agrees with Mr. Hopps's summation that, "Learning to read is the best knowledge you can have."

Students are concerned about appropriate behavior when engaging in literacy practices in the public situation of using the subways. This is a separate set of issues, distinct from how literacy is used instrumentally to get from one point in the city to another. For example, once they are on the correct train, many students try to read the posters for practice, but reading in such a public situation makes them self-conscious about their reading behavior. For example, when Mr. Taylor is on the train, he tries to sound out the words on the posters, but this means moving his mouth and then, he says, "I see somebody lookin' at me going -- I don't want them to know I'm having trouble."

Other students would like to use train rides to read their books, but they are self-conscious when they feel their materials look childish. For example, Ms. Carón explains, "It's embarrassing. I don't open [my books]. Maybe with a magazine -- just look at the pictures but I don't read it. When I'm home I take my time, but not on the train." Ms. Lopez and Ms. Higgins concur that they are embarrassed to open their books in public as well. Ms. Higgins explains, "I don't like reading on the train, either, when there's a whole lot of pictures in the book.... That bothers me.... If I have a book with a bunch of pictures in it, I don't bother about reading -- I know I could read it, but I wouldn't be, you know, I'd look through it right fast, if I'm doing it on the train. But if I'm home, I'll take my own time.... I feel funny." Mr. Walsh is concerned about reading in public because he feels he makes too many mistakes when he reads to himself; he wants to read out loud, but feels that he cannot do that in public.

Adults have been riding the subways for years, often watching others read to pass the time. Mr. Garcia explains that he does not want to look like, "some people I see in the subway reading silently the book,.. you can see their mouth, they talk to themselves, things like that." Students have clear images of public literacy practices, or what proficient readers on the subway look like -- how they hold their newspapers or books, how long it takes to turn the pages, how their eyes move and how their lips are still. Entering the group of proficient subway readers is an important accomplishment for many students. As a case in point, Ms. Leach shares her experience:

> On Saturdays when I was on the train, you know how people leave newspapers on the train? So I had picked up the newspaper on the train. So I was just looking through and I was reading an article about this lady had killed this baby because the baby was crying so much.... I knew all the words in the story but by me just reading and understanding some of the words and trying to figure out what was the story about, you know, I really understood what was going on.

Ms. Leach was surprised that she could understand the newspaper, but even more important to her was that she now could do something she had watched others do for years: "I see a lot of people on the train. They have books and newspapers and this and that. And they be reading on the train. [Now] I can do the same thing, too!" Mr. Mangiapane also cites as an impact of his participation in LVNYC that, "Now I'm able to get on the subway and I don't think nothing of picking up a book and read it!"

Ms. Higgins was trying to read a book that she felt was too difficult for her; eventually she changed to a different book, but first she tried to read it while traveling on the subway. She explains her predicament:

> I was sitting on the subway and I am conscious of people maybe looking at me or how long I'm taking on one particular -- I'm very conscious of that--and by me reading that book there on the subway, I couldn't really take all the time that is needed for me to figure that word out. So, like I'm really speeding through it and not really doing anything but fooling -- I'm not even fooling myself but probably fooling them. You know, 'Boy, she can read fast,' and I'm not knowing nothing.

Now, she says, "I'm trying to get myself out of this being so conscious of reading--but like I said, my speed has picken up, so it don't really bother me that much on the train, but like that book tackled me and I just was spending too much time."

"It gonna swallow my card": Banking

Although many students talk about being able to read bills now, they often still bring cash to pay the bill. Banks are public situations, and many students describe the traumas of the paperwork necessary to open an account and to deposit and withdraw money, as well as learning how to write out checks. They talk with pride about opening a bank account as one of the impacts of their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City and bank accounts figure prominently in stories about the traps that can be found in everyday places. For example, when Ms. Sharpe claims that now she can deal with the forms at her bank, Mr. Delisi reminds her that sometimes the forms are changed, creating difficulties. Ms. Sharpe agrees; sometimes the simplest words, such as "Name" and "Address" are written in ways that are confusing. Mr. Delisi laughs and says, "You know, every six months they got some guy getting paid $3 million just to write these fancy words -- I mean, come on, give me a break, just say address on it. That's it." Many students maintain a book that lists numbers and words to help themselves write checks and deposit slips.

Opening a bank account signifies movement to a new level of independence for many students. For example, Mr. Delisi's sister pushed him to open his own checking account: "I never needed it because I always gave my sister money to make a check out and then my other sister told me, 'You gotta do it because you know you've got to move on, you know. [When] you're by yourself and you gotta pay rent, you ain't gonna pay the guy in cash.'... [I] said, 'You're right.' So I did it." For the first time, Ms. Lopez now feels that she can write out her own checks, often without consulting her list of numbers and words.

When students write out checks at home, they are engaging in public practices in a private place; when they write their checks out at the bank, however, the situation is public and the tension increases. The automatic teller machine is a public practice in a public situation as well, and Ms. Lopez is intimidated:

> Sometimes I don't want to try, I'm too scared to try 'cause I was afraid that I was going to do it wrong. The hardest thing for me to do is the computers in the bank. I still can't get the hang of it and I always get scared 'cause if its gonna swallow my card. But one time I did it all by myself and I felt good that I was able to do it.

It is not the task itself, it seems, but the social conditions of the task -- the fact that there is a line waiting for Ms. Lopez to be finished: "That's what always gets me more scared -- the people waiting and you don't really have the time to take your time 'cause you gotta work fast. So lately I've been asking [my husband] go with me and you help me out."

"It's not even gravy": Grocery Shopping

When students' literacy skills are low they tend to shop very conservatively; that is, they describe themselves as buying the same groceries all the time rather than trying new products or new foods. Mr. Taylor admits, "I usually stick with what I do know. I don't even try too many new things unless somebody maybe tell me about it.... Like experimenting with myself, I don't." Ms. Sharpe talks poignantly about simply wanting to be able to read the labels on food in the supermarket, and Mr. Hopps is tired of having to ask people in the store where to find something that is plainly marked. The students in one focus group continued trading supermarket stories until finally Mr. Delisi sums it up; after all the headaches in the store, "You [still] didn't even know what the hell did you buy? I mean, you buying something to make gravy, all of a sudden, it's catsup. I mean, it's not even gravy. I mean, you just say [he pretends to be tasting it], 'What is it?' It's scary!"

Many students describe feeling able to buy new foods and to read labels without assistance; this is no small accomplishment. Students also feel better able to respond to dietary restrictions, as Ms. Knowles explains: "The last two year my grandson, he's there you know. He don't eat no pork. And I have to really watch the labels and I find myself comfortable now looking at the labels." Furthermore, Ms. Knowles is ready to change other behaviors as well, with the support of her group:

> I don't make a list [when I go shopping]... I just go ahead, I know what I have to get and I just go ahead and get it.... Well, I don't know, but now [my group] want to make you make a list now.... One lady did it already, and I think it's better.... And that way you know how to spell different things, too. And so I'm gonna get into that, too.

Discussion

Students apply their skills differently in the variety of public situations in which they find themselves outside the program. Their literacy practices in banks, grocery stores, subway trains and on their jobs have been changing as they become more skilled and more confident. These are arenas in which it is clear that literacy is indeed a social practice.

The situations and literacy practices students describe in this chapter reflect the dominant culture. Students are not only learning how to do a specific reading or writing task, they are learning how to appropriately embed that task in a practice. As Ferdman (1990) explains, "To be literate it is not enough, for example, to know how to sign one's name. One must also know when and where it is appropriate to do so. Reading and writing behaviors must be done in the "right" way" (p. 187). The literacy skills adults need in the variety of situations they describe range from the ability to read many different kind of typefaces on products in the supermarket to deciphering subway maps and instructions on a bank computer terminal. In all of these situations they want to fit in. They do not want to keep the line waiting at the bank or the grocery store; they do not want to draw attention to themselves on the subway platform as they struggle to figure out which side will have the uptown train.

But behavior that is considered appropriate in these situations varies from culture to culture. Shopping at the neighborhood store where everyone knows everyone else requires different interpersonal etiquette than does shopping at a large impersonal supermarket. Students are developing a repertoire of culturally-situated and culturally-appropriate literacy practices. As they move among situations, they apply their skills accordingly, as Ferdman explains: "In a culturally heterogeneous society, literacy ceases to be a characteristic inherent solely in the individual. It becomes an interactive process that is constantly redefined and renegotiated, as the individual transacts with the socioculturally fluid surroundings" (p. 187). Interactions with the environment and with other people that involve literacy are integrated into the flow of interaction. Viewing literacy as social practices helps us understand the kind of socialization process in which the students at LVNYC are involved. They are learning about becoming literate persons in specific social and cultural contexts (Ferdman, 1990; Freire, 1985).

Suarez, Montgomery and Danin (1989), in a different context, provide another useful way of viewing these impacts of program participation. On one level, students' ability to engage in new practices, or to engage old practices in new ways, can be considered what they call "client task outcomes." At the same time there are "enabling outcomes," which are evidenced by the new perspectives and attitudes that students describe. These enabling outcomes are the foundation for the continued generation of additional task outcomes. As students continue to feel more confident about their ability and more secure in their relationships, they can try additional new tasks and practices. Finally, as students engage more fully in the mainstream culture, a third set of outcomes becomes apparent: "society outcomes."

Students attribute extreme importance to being able to fit in to mainstream American society as they view it in New York City. Students did not talk about the public life of their communities, or about engagement with others in social change or social action. They did not question whose interests are served by the standards they attribute to public practices. Students show evidence of a very traditional, individualistic orientation to literacy skills development that reflects their understanding of the individualistic nature of American social philosophy and the situated nature of literacy practices.

"I'M NOT HIDING ANY MORE": CHANGES IN BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Students' definitions of situations are informed by their feelings about themselves and about literacy. As students participate in instruction and use their skills inside and outside the program, their feelings and attitudes change; this, in turn, influences how they use their skills. Beliefs, feelings and attitudes are social constructs, connected to students' cultural backgrounds, life experiences and personalities. They also are situational; students may feel comfortable about themselves or their literacy skills at some times and uncomfortable at others. In this section we discuss these changes in attitudes. Then we place them in a larger perspective as we focus on the concept of shame which is central to so many students' narratives.

"Going towards that 'why not?'": General change in attitudes toward self and learning

When students first enter the program, they often feel better simply because they are taking a step, confronting a problem and doing something for themselves. Ms. Alvarez, for example, is a new student who attests:

> I feel good about myself, especially coming over here and, you know, like seeing the people from my group.... And not only that, but there's a lot of people is noticing the change in me.... A lot of my friends... say, 'I don't know if it's lately or... you're more happy.... You don't look so down and depressed.'... I'm taking more better care of myself... because like I feel better about myself. I'm doing something for myself instead of like before, feeling real sorry for myself, down and depressed.

Although the initial sense of exhilaration sustains involvement at the beginning, students need to see progress in their skills in order to continue feeling good about themselves. Ms. Franklin, a graduate of the program, describes how that feels:

> Everyday I learned more and more.... I didn't really think I could really learn because I was always -- you know, people was always saying you're dumb, you can't learn 'cause you can't read and write. But it's not true. And I found that out so much. Oh, it make me feel so much better to know that I really wasn't a dumb person. You know, you know after all of that and I could really learn.

Ms. Franklin's interactions have changed as her sense of herself changed. She explains,

> The people that do know me and know what predicament I'm in, some of them get mad with me because they can't tell me nothing no more. Nah, they know I have learned a lot. They say, 'Oh, you've come a long ways.' And now like I got a teacher friend, she had the nerve to get mad with me one time: 'Just 'cause you learned a little bit that don't mean you know ---.' I said, 'I know what I'm talking about this time and you can't tell me I don't know enough about this. I don't care how much education you got,' 'cause see, that's what I like to do. Don't tell me what I don't know what I'm talking about. She said, 'No, just because you done graduate in this.' I said, 'Let me tell you one thing -- I knew it before but I wasn't sure of it. And now I know and I'm sure.'

Ms. Mitchell is still hoping for skills change to support her good feelings: "It kind of helps you come out of the closet when you're with the group and everyone, but I really don't see too much I am accomplishing. I keep saying I'm gonna stick with it a little longer and see how it's gonna work out. And if not, I feel that I will go on to something that's a little more positive for me." Group coherence is a factor in Ms. Mitchell's decision to stay: "Everyone gets to know everyone and if you have any problems you discuss it with each other And we can all iron it out together, so that's why I decided I'll stick with it for awhile and see what I'm going to get out of it."

As students experience some success with their studies, they talk about change in their attitudes toward reading and writing tasks, in their willingness to struggle with literacy. Mr. Taylor, for example, says he "challenges myself more.... [When I] see something, you just try to sound it out, stay with it.... I didn't challenge myself that much [before].... I'm on the train now, I read the signs, with my mouth, I try to sound things out." Mr. Rollins also explains, "I feel good because I can pick up a book and the title of the book might be a little hard, but I try to break it down.... I just keep trying, keep trying." And Mr. Guerrero says: "It build my confidence in trying, to know that there is a way, some way or another, there's a way that I can learn. And by being in the program and being here I got somewhere to go to, like I got somewhere to pick up a book and be around people that can't read either and it give me more the confidence to just try to read."

Many students talk about their willingness to try new books, new words, new tasks and new challenges. Ms. Lopez, for example, claims that now,

> I was able to tackle books that I didn't think I could ever really read, and giving me the enthusiastic to really give it a good try, even if I don't know the words -- some of the words I may not know. What I do is I get a little pad, write the words down but continue to read. Not to stop. The object is not to quit. And sometimes there's a lot of words I don't know, but I'll continue to read. As long as I understand what I'm reading, I won't quit.... But what they do teach you is not to quit. You can do it.

Ms. Lopez's husband Manuel concurs, explaining, "It's not stressful. Before it was like the most stressful thing. It was like a chore. Now it's something that she enjoys." Mr. Lopez continues:

> Before she'd use the past as an excuse, like there was no way to change it. Like I think it was Robert Kennedy who said some people see things as they are and ask why and they get stuck in the why, you know. And so they never advance. And then he said that some people dream things that never were and ask why not. And now she's going towards that 'why not?'... She's going forward.

Many of the students we spoke with are actually enjoying reading and writing for the first time in their lives. For example, Ms. Sharpe exclaims: "Reading is enjoying because, I mean when I pick up the book, and I see I could read the first page, second page, third page, and I'm reading so clearly, my punctuation is in perfect order and everything -- it's like a new toy!"

Attitudes towards literate adults have changed also. Ms. Ross, a former student, explains:

> The not-knowing how to read has made us feel that people who are educated are the know-all and do-all. I was very amazed the first time... my tutor said, 'Am I spelling this right?' And I looked at her and said, you know, I was like totally shocked. I thought that people who were educated could read everything and spell everything. I knew they made mistakes and they were human -- don't get me wrong. I just assumed that if they knew how to read and write, they knew how to read and write everything. I've had tutors tell me, you know, 'There are books that I pick up that I can't even read.'... It blew me away you know.... I thought that everybody that was educated automatically just knew everything.

And attitudes toward their stigma have changed as well: "It helped me," Mr. Paynter attests. "[My tutor] showed me how many people in the world had a reading problem. It's a lot. I said 'Wow, I didn't know it was so many people.' You know, I thought it was just me and just a couple people that was here."

And students' attitudes towards themselves as learners are changing. Many students have taken the initiative to begin learning other new skills, using community resources as well as the program. They talk about their insight into ways that they learn best. For example, Ms. Lopez enjoyed studying for her driver's license test because the teacher did "everything visual." She explains: "He took a big construction paper and then showed you how everything goes.... And then the signs. He told you what it was and then he brought in people. The sign means you can't cross. People are crossing the sidewalk. It was really good. So if you see it, it stays in your mind more than reading it."

Mr. Delisi decided that he wanted to learn how to type, so, he says, "I went to the library where I lived at and I filled out a library form. And I got right there, right there, the library card -- 'How long do I have to wait?' 'No, you can get it right here.' I said, 'Oh, God, I don't believe it. The future's right here.' I said thanks. I got the library card and then I got me a typewriter book." Mr. Delisi also is learning to play the piano "to calm my nerves because I get aggravated so fast.... It's fun. You learn how to read notes. It's the same thing by reading the book 'cause it's got, you know, the words on the bottom and you read it." And Ms. Lopez is teaching herself to make clothes for herself and her family. She explains, "I've learned to do it without reading a lot of it.... The patterns have pictures... so I follow the pictures with the pins.... I don't read it because sometimes I can't read it so I'll look, it says 'stitching' here -- you gotta stitch.... Now when it doesn't have a picture, then I'm in trouble. I have to force myself to read it."

Mr. Delisi summarizes his changes in attitudes and feelings and their relationship to skills. He feels good, he has new tools and new skills, and he feels positive: "I'm learning, I'm writing a lot.... First time I've looked in a dictionary. I feel so positive, you know. I always put myself down... I can't do this, I can't do that.... I'm not putting myself down no more. I'm picking myself up and I'm feeling positive. And it feels good. I do get stuck with some words. I skip it.... And then I'll go back to it and just try to break it down. Ahh, I feel great. This place helped me a lot. The people are nice, the group is great. We communicate and, you know, it's a good time and I'm learning."

"Out of the closet": Shame and Performance Anxiety

In spite of widespread positive changes in self-concept and attitudes among the students participating in this study, there remain great individual variation in the extent to which students actually apply their skills to engage in literacy practices in new ways. We find that there appear to be two conditions that inhibit students using their skills as fully as possible in their lives outside the program; both are related to the effect of being around other people. In some cases, students do not want others to know the status of their skills, in the past or at present. They do not want to do "old" tasks in new ways because that might raise questions about what has changed, or they do not want to try doing new tasks because they might embarrass themselves.

These issues are related to the stigma of illiteracy. The other instances have to do with adult learners virtually losing their skills when in a situation that is highly charged; they find themselves unable to do things in public that they were able to do in private. Again related to stigma and shame, this second category also has to do with what psychologists call "performance anxiety," a state of such high anxiety that performance is impaired.

The students who participated in this evaluation study talk about shame that is deep, pervasive and persistent. Its roots run back to childhood memories of difficult schooling, family and community experiences. Although shame often is treated as an individual, psychological phenomenon, it is created as a response to some message in the social environment. That environment feels unsafe, and people talk of "hiding." Mr. Paynter, for example, did not go job-hunting with his friends because he did not want them to know about his "reading problem." Mr. Shabazz feels vulnerable to his cousin, because: "Only one person in my job know I am a student here -- that's my cousin, he work there. And I don't know if he run off with his mouth and tell everybody,.. but they never look at me in a different way, so I guess he didn't say anything." Ms. Knowles had the opportunity to appear on television as a Literacy Volunteers of New York City student while she was still working, but she declined. Now she is retired and feels differently. She explains: "[When I didn't appear on TV], I didn't want people to see me. I was still in the closet. I didn't want people to know." The sense of shame interferes with getting help when it is needed. For example, Mr. Taylor explains that, "Sometime you might need some help and you can't find nobody that you want to -- you don't want to just run to everybody. Some people you want to keep in private." And Ms. Higgins speaks to the same point: "I don't like going to people. I don't mind bothering [my tutor] because he's here to teach me, you know. 'Cause I don't like going through too many people, asking how to spell this."

Mr. Paynter's sense of shame continues to interfere with his creating relationships, even when the situation has all the characteristics of safety. For example, Mr. Paynter visited Mr. Ellis, another student from the program, at home. Mr. Ellis' friends know of Mr. Ellis' involvement in LVNYC, and Mr. Paynter was distressed to find out that not only were Mr. Ellis' friends going to visit, but that Mr. Ellis had told them about Mr. Paynter's participation in the program as well. Mr. Paynter was so uncomfortable that, "The whole time his friends there I wouldn't say nothing. I was quiet. I wouldn't talk.... I just feel like they're gonna make fun of me. Tease me, laugh at me." When asked if they appeared to make fun of Mr. Ellis, Mr. Paynter admitted,

> No, I saw them helping him with his bills and what not.... They help him out. Like in a way I feel like saying maybe I should tell my friends and they would help me the same way, too. But I'm scared to take that chance.... I'm just so scared, I'm so embarrassed, too ashamed of it. It's hard for me to get out of that, 'cause like I know my friends will help me but --

Many students have some perspective on their general ability, apart from their difficulty with literacy skills. Mr. Delisi, for example, says, "I can be good at mechanics. You have the knowledge. You can't say you don't. You could look at a car and know what ticks, or you could know accounting. You know how to do it, but you never had school, but you know how to pick up things." Ms. Sharpe agrees, "Yeah, it's like, in my home. I mean, I could cook, I could keep a good house -- and there are some people that can't cook!" But Mr. Hopps brings them back to literacy: "But the only difference is reading. So you know, if you don't know how to do that, you still have a handicap in a lot of things." Ms. Franklin, in a separate conversation, says,

> I say hey, that's what make us smarter, see. We have the ability to do a lot of other things that some people that can't read -- 'cause like, we got the sense that we had to have all of these years to get around in this world and learn things. And the only thing, the people that read all their lives, all they do is go by the books. We can't just go by the books. See we have to go by our common sense and everything.

Students' shame and sense of hopelessness is the result of negative personal experiences. For example, Mr. Hopps explains that, "People used to look at you just because you cannot read and they don't want to be with you, and so therefore they shy you away, even if you were friends before. And if they find out you cannot read, they might look at you and say, "I'm staying away from you." Mr. Delisi explains that he learned long ago, "Don't open up too much. Sometimes you can't open up because people can't react to it. They can't understand, you know." When Ms. Sharpe tried being open,

> If that person didn't listen or anything then you have that all bungled up inside and it feels, it hurts. You go to bed in the night, lie down and.... I used to cry a lot. I lay on my bed, you know, when I finish doing my daily chores. I go to my room, I lie on my bed and not to say cry, cry, but when I think about that, you know, Lord, am I gonna live the rest of my life can't, won't be able to read or anything? All I'm able to do is to write my name and my date of my birth. The tears just bathed me down, you know.

Mr. Delisi adds, "The pressure -- you get headaches, 'cause you get mad, and when you get mad, you hurt your loved ones, because you get upset and you start getting on their case, and that's wrong. That's when you gotta decide you gotta get help."

Ms. Mastrionni challenged the interviewer:

> I don't know if you remember the first time you ever met somebody that didn't know how to read. First, they were speaking to you like anybody and all of a sudden they say, "You know I can't read." Did your expression change? Did you think differently about them? A lot of people do when you tell them I can't read. All of a sudden...now you're a dumb idiot. Before you were someone to have a conversation with, but after you told them that they totally changed their opinion and you could hear it in their voice, you could see it in their face.

Confronting deep feelings of shame requires courage on the part of the students, and this can be nurtured by environments in which adults feel safe and accepted. One of the most empowering consequences of participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City is when students begin to feel some measure of liberation from shame. Mr. Rollins, for example, explains: "At one time I was nervous to say anything, but by me kind of moving in real slow, I said to myself, 'Why I got to be ashamed about? I'm doing something for myself, not for nobody else.' So I just went on and started speaking and started talking, reading and everything. It's wonderful! I love it!"

Many students talk about this process of becoming less embarrassed and more open. For example, Ms. Leach explains: "By me coming to the Center, I began to feel more comfortable about myself, relaxed, be able to talk to people about my problem instead of keeping it inside." Ms. Leach continues: "This program helps me to not be ashamed of it, to come out in the open." And Ms. Lopez attests: ""I'm beginning to have that confidence that I don't need to be telling people I can't read.... I've learned to take a chance and not be embarrassed. And say, 'Look I have trouble with spelling.'" When Ms. Sharpe had an opportunity to appear on television for LVNYC, she reports that her mother said, "You sure you should have done that? I mean, the whole of New York is gonna be watching?" Ms. Sharpe, however, feels that it is, "nothing to be ashamed about." Ms. Knowles describes the build-up of embarrassment over all the years she has had to ask for assistance with literacy tasks; she says there is, "so much stuff built up in you." Now that her skills have improved, she realizes that, "After you get out of the club, you feel like a load lifted off of you, you know?"

Students make a direct connection between participation in the program and changes in their sense of shame. Initially it has to do with coming to the Center and participating in a group with others who have similar secrets. Although Mr. Taylor remains closed to the world outside the program, he says that, "Over here it's alright," to let people know he cannot read well. Ms. Franklin remembers the importance of feeling accepted in the program:

> First of all, they let me know I was a person that had a mind of my own and I could learn. And I wasn't no different from nobody else outside when it come to the reading, and once you learn how to read, you ain't no different. And the

> people that teach at Literacy, they are really good at that and they make you feel wanted, good, and they make you feel like you want to read and learn. And they don't -- most of them that I met -- they ain't never known none to put you down.

Relationships with tutors are as important as relationships with other students, often. Mr. Paynter, for example, also has not become open with new people outside the program, but he explains that,

> I'm more comfortable with myself now, because like the tutors they talk to me and what not. You know they tell me about they problems, too, and what not. Like, it make me feel better knowing that I'm not the only one who's got problems and what not.... [That] make me start thinking, well, maybe they right, stop worrying about other people, thinking what they gonna say about you. You know, just worry about yourself. Take care of yourself. Do what's right for you.

Other students struggle with overcoming their sense of shame in the world outside the program; they consistently talk about "coming out of the closet." Ms. Sharpe, for example, reflects on her relationships with people who may not understand her,

> That's the hardest part. I say, I come out of my closet, out of this dark closet I was in for many years. I'm out of it, I have no intention of going back inside it and close the door.... I'm out and I'm doing it, so I have nothing to be ashamed about. You know, I mean, that's their problem. If it's a problem to them, that's their problem. That's not my problem.... I don't need people like that.

Mr. Delisi overcame his embarrassment and says, "I told a friend of mine. She's a teacher. That's what's so great about it and she understands, and says, 'Never be afraid to tell people if you have a reading problem.'"

Ms. Higgins has told the people she works with because she needs permission to leave work early to make it to her tutoring session at 5:00. She appreciates their support: "I don't try to hide it from them; I told them I'm going to try to betterfy myself, to upbring my reading or eventually try to get my GED." Ms. Leach also has found her boss helpful, as she explains:

> I kept everything inside, it was like hard for me to -- I just felt so much pain inside because I seen other people who can do things and did better jobs and be able to understand certain things and then that just makes you feel bad inside because you feel that you can't do it. So it -- but now ever since I started coming

> to this program I started being more open with myself and letting people know my situation you know, and getting it out and now I feel more relaxed. Like with my boss, I explained the situation to him and he understood me very well and it's like sometimes when I say, 'Well, would you like to help me with my journal or would you like to hear my journal,' he's willing to help me and then with my job now they want me to move up to a position.

The sense of shame seems to begin to lift as the result of a combination of being in an environment in which it feels safe to be open as well as actual skill development, so that students' relationships to the tasks themselves are changing. Ms. Knowles, for example, talks about the relief that comes from being able to do new things on her own; this contributes a great deal to her willingness to let others know about her skills. Ms. Knowles says she feels like a "burden has been lifted" because she does not have to lie or ask others to help her any more. Ms. Sharpe no longer feels the build-up of pressure that used to send her to bed crying; she attributes that partly to her skills development. Rather than feel sorry for herself on the weekend, now she says, "On Sunday I take the day in the afternoon and I sit and I study, write my story, do whatever I have to do, and I go to sleep." Mr. Delisi agrees that the program is helping: "We're making it. We're not putting ourselves down.... This is helping everybody here.... It makes you feel special." This point is similar to the point made earlier about confidence; there is an early sense of excitement from simply doing something to make a change. It must be supported by actual skill change, though, or it will wither. Ms. Franklin comments, "Like I said, they don't make you feel like you's a big dummy. And they make what you got in you, come out. They show you how to bring it out.... How to come out of my shell and not be so afraid to look at nobody."

One student remarked that she could now "tell some of [her] friends can't read and write that [she] couldn't tell before [she] learned how to read and write." It may be that as her identity began changing, her perspective on her own shame and stigma changed as well. She explains, "There are certain things that we do that we cannot read and write, that people that can read and write do not do.... There's a certain thing. It's just a feeling. You can tell right away. 'Cause you can give somebody, say, 'Here, sign your name here,' or read this application, and say, they'll say, 'Oh, I don't feel like doing that.'" Later in the same conversation, she adds that, "One thing they taught me, and it helped me a lot, too – that everybody cannot spell.... I used to think if you came from college or you [a] finished lady, I used to think you could spell everything, read to me, you understand everything." This raises the possibility that her entire perspective is changing, including her understanding of others as well as herself.

Sometimes students' fears about others knowing about their literacy skills leads to very high anxiety when they have to perform in a public situation. As a result, they may actually lose some of their skills in that situation, a condition known as performance anxiety. For example, Ms. Leach explains that even though she can recognize a word while she is in class, she often cannot recognize the same word if she encounters it "outside." Mr. Delisi attests to the fact that the accepting environment at LVNYC is important because of the high anxiety that students feel: "You have to feel comfortable. If you feel uptight, you're not gonna learn. You're always gonna feel nervous." Mr. Taylor describes a situation in which he went to the bank, confident of his skills; but, he says, "when I was down there I couldn't do it.... The pressure and I was afraid I would make a mistake." And Ms. Lopez talks about how she "cannot work the computers" at the bank's automatic teller machine; the line of people waiting in back of her is nerve-wracking.

When Ms. Hobson is relaxed, she can read the pieces she has written for public Celebrations of LVNYC. At the actual Celebrations, though, Ms. Hobson says, she'd have to "memorize" her piece. Ms. Franklin, in the same conversation, responds to Ms. Hobson with her own experience: "I look straight ahead. Nobody here but me," and Ms. Frame says she watches herself in the mirror. Ms. Hobson, however, says she's tried all that but, "it doesn't work." She just, "goes blank in front of strangers." Ms. Franklin's anxiety takes a different form; she says, "My mind goes blank in front of my family. I'm better in front of strangers."

Ms. Mastrionni explains, "When I'm here,.. I believe there's nothing I can't write or nothing I can't read... but when I'm in my house and I do the same thing I do here with no one there to help me -- you know something, I don't really know how to read and write.... If I get nervous, forget it. What I knows goes out the window. OK?... It's not really there. It's not really there." Ms. Ferguson, in the same conversation, agrees, "If you get on the outside, to be honest, and you're stuck -- you get stuck and you have to do something -- you don't really know." Ms. Mastrionni adds, "You do a lot of bluffing."

Seifert (1991), talking about performance anxiety for students in school, explains,

> If anxiety becomes too strong, it keeps students from directing all of their attention to the task at hand and becomes what is called performance anxiety. Instead some attention goes to the discomfort itself: the student keeps noticing how uncomfortable and distracted she feels, how much she is fidgeting, and the like. Another part may also go to self-criticism: the student becomes preoccupied and self-conscious about feeling anxious, thinks she should not be feeling this way, feels stupid, and the like. In effect, anxious students have less short-term memory available because they are using part of it to worry. (p. 217)

Seifert says, "A vicious circle begins: chronic anxiety may cause academic performance to deteriorate, and poor performance may "prove" the need to keep worrying" (p. 217).

Weinstein (1990) talks a little more about "worry;" she says that:

> Worry is often manifested in something we call negative self-talk which feeds on itself. "I'm no good; I can't do it; why am I here?" All of this negative self-talk feeds on something called irrational beliefs such as "The rest of my life depends upon this one task."... Thus, one of the mechanisms by which anxiety disrupts performance is by diverting our attention. It diverts our attention from task-relevant thoughts and behavior to irrelevant thoughts and worries. (p. 25)

One way of dealing with performance anxiety is to "over-practice" the tasks so that they come almost automatically when someone is in a stressful public situation.

It was interesting, therefore, that the students' suggestions for the instructional program often had to do with practicing anxiety-producing tasks inside the program in preparation for handling them outside. Mr. Delisi requests more materials that resemble those he has to deal with on the outside:

> Some books in there are just like, forget about it. That goes out the window there. No, but most important today in life is filling out applications. Like, right now, they're learning how to drive, so they're reading how to, the words, the manual. That's great. That's what everybody should do. Applications, bank receipts, a lot of things, 'cause that's life.... The material in the world, your life. Paperwork. What it comes down to, when you go to the bank or go for anything, you write something down, you write your name. That's a receipt. That's everything.

Ms. Lopez was pleased when her driver's education teacher came with her to her test, transferring from the inside out.

Discussion

Improved self-esteem and self-confidence are the most often-cited impacts of participation in adult literacy education; they are pervasive for the participants in Literacy Volunteers of New York City as well. But where most other studies list and describe impacts, the students participating in this project help us place these impacts in the contexts of their lives. Self-esteem is a social construct, the result of adults' interactions with their inner and outer worlds. It also is integrally connected to actual skills development.

The underlying reasons for negative self-esteem have to do with adults feeling that they have a stigmatizing condition; in the dominant society, the inability to deal with literacy tasks has come to be seen as a generalized indicator of low intelligence and low value. "Illiterate" is a pejorative term connoting someone's inability to take her or his place as a full member of the human community. It is viewed as an individual failing and adults are blamed for their "condition," their dignity trampled. It is in the context of the dominant culture's worldview that low literacy skills emerge as a stigma.

Goffman's (1963) work is particularly helpful for understanding the relationship between stigma, shame and behavior. Goffman's descriptions of stigmatized persons resonate with student's stories:

> An individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated. (p. 5)

Goffman's concept of stigma assumes that the stigmatized person values the same attributes as those valued by the group defining "normal." The sense of failure to meet a set of standards has been internalized. In this normative context of comparison and judgment, Goffman explains, "Shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing" (p. 7). This can be more deeply illuminated through an analysis of how oppressed people internalize the oppressor, coming to judge themselves and others negatively by the same normative standards that are being used to control and oppress them (Freire, 1970).

Shame and stigma can lead to the kind of deep personal retreat from social contact that we hear some students describe; they go out of their way to avoid social contact because it might bring their stigma to light, and then, "Lacking the salutary feed-back of daily social intercourse with others, the self-isolate can become suspicious, depressed, hostile, anxious, and bewildered" (Goffman, p. 13).

When the stigma is something like illiteracy, which cannot be known by simply meeting another person, adults are constantly confronted with decisions about how to manage the information -- who to tell and who to hide it from. One way that adults manage information about their identity is to use "disidentifiers," signs that throw observers off the track (Goffman); this includes nonreading adults who carry newspapers around or who look confidently at the menu in a restaurant.

Since literacy is situational and literacy practices vary in different contexts, stigma and shame vary as well. Indeed, Goffman says,

> Stigma involves not so much a set of concrete individuals who can be separated into two piles, the stigmatized and the normal, as a pervasive two-role social process in which every individual participates in both roles, at least in some connections and in some phases of life. The normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives. These are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter. (p. 137-8)

Low self-esteem is a social construct, connected to adults' sense of shame and stigma. It follows that learners' attitudes and confidence will change when either: (1) the stigmatizing condition changes (i.e., they develop literacy skills); or (2) their perspective on the stigmatizing condition changes (i.e., they realize that their low literacy skills are not their "fault"). When students talk about coming out of the closet, they are describing a profound process of renegotiating their definitions of normal and discrediting and their relationship to the dominant culture. Once the deep sense of shame begins to abate, anxiety over performance will change as well.

CHAPTER 7. "IT GIVE YOU SORT OF A POWER": THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Student Leadership Program complements the instructional program as Literacy Volunteers of New York City tries to fully implement its student-centered philosophy. It consists of the Student Committee, a student attending board meetings, and former students who are student advocates on the staff of the central office, forming the Student Leadership Team. Students also participate in orienting new students, training volunteers, and media presentations about the program. LVNYC is acknowledged around the country as one of the leaders in supporting literacy student leadership development. The program presents challenges to students, tutors, and staff alike.

In the early stages of our research we tried to understand how direct participation in the Student Leadership Program (as a student representative, for example) has an impact on students' skills or attitudes. We soon realized that we also had to look at whether there was a general impact on students in the program, whether they were directly participating in it as student representatives or simply attending class at a Center. We soon began to understand that students' views of the leadership program are developed in the context of the broader range of students' involvement with the instructional program. Attitudes toward working with or as a student representative are formed as part of the larger processes through which students interact with the structures of power and authority in the program generally. Thus we became more attuned to listening to how students talk about the degree of control they feel they have over their own circumstances in the program, and to the overall climate of authority and control relationships among everybody involved -- students, staff, and volunteers.

Students see a route to leadership roles in the program. It begins in their tutoring sessions, where they can, sometimes, take leadership roles. Then, they can be elected as one of their Center's two student representatives to the Student Committee. They also can represent the program at conferences and to the media, and they can be elected to the LVNYC board. As their literacy skills develop to the point where they graduate from the instructional program, they see that some former students are employed as Center Assistants and others serve as the Student Leadership Team on the staff in the central office.

Although these positions appear to carry with them some amount of power and authority, students look beneath the structures to examine the real extent to which it is possible to influence the program. Therefore, we begin this chapter with a discussion of the programmatic context of power relationships within which students operate. Then we look specifically at the student representatives' roles, the Student Committee's functions, and the extent to which participants in this program feel that this is an opportunity to continue their learning and exercise power.

"PULLING RANK": THE PROGRAMMATIC CONTEXT OF POWER RELATIONSHIPS

Students experience power relationships at all levels and in all situations in the program. In this section we examine the formal relationships of authority and the messages they seem to communicate about power.

The Tutoring Group. The tutoring group is the main arena in which most students directly experience power relationships in the program. During tutor training, tutors are asked to break down the traditional distinctions between teachers and students, and to respect their students' knowledge and experience. During the Tutor Committee meeting, one of the tutors commented that one of the things that has been hardest for her to learn has been, "breaking down that tutor dependency... and just really taking your cues from what [the students] want to learn, and that's a hard thing to do because [the students] will push you not to do that.... If you start to fall into that kind of tutor deciding with everything, [the students will] help you right along because that's comfortable." She admits (and the other tutors agree with her) that she was used to the traditional roles as well, "We were all raised on it and it's so easy -- you know, to kind of fall back into that." In her group, she says she is trying to "do some type of leadership thing" in which "somebody who's a little bit better on something or has an interest, OK, get that ready for the next class." Another tutor agrees that he also finds moving to a new paradigm of teaching and learning to be one of the hardest challenges he is facing as a tutor. He has been, "trying to hand over more sort of leadership stuff to individual students in our group, and to some extent fostering communication between the students about that sort of stuff." Mr. Jeffries, a former student, attests to his belief in the power of the tutoring group to be a source of control for students:

> I think that one of the best things that [LVNYC] had done was put people into groups. I think that one-on-one situation kept people in that mold that's not being able to take charge of some of their learning. I'm not saying people take charge of all of it, but they can get bits and pieces.... I think I see it more now than when it was in the past. I think students is taking a little more... picking out their material.

Students know that their tutors operate in a program environment in which they are expected to comply with specific policies. When students ask their tutors to work in ways that differ from those policies, they are aware, often, that they are asking their tutors to choose between responsiveness and compliance. Tutors feel this stress keenly at times; it is referred to in other parts of this report, particularly around instructional issues such as silent reading and teaching phonics skills. It also surfaced during a conversation about the structure of tutoring sessions. For example, one tutor talks about how she "inherited" a tutoring group that was used to reading one night and writing the other, rather than doing both reading and writing at each session as the program recommends. The tutor says there was a "lot of discussion" with students about the change; when the students resisted, the tutors "pulled rank. " The tutor explains: "We tried democracy but it didn't work."

Students see tutors as authority figures; student meetings in the Centers with their student representatives provide opportunities for students to come together. One student representative explains: "Sometime we don't want meetings with tutors... because I want to know what the students feel.... And what they feel about the site itself. And what about the program itself that would, we could make things better for the site and maybe help the site up."

Center Directors. After their tutors, students have to deal with the authority of their Center Directors. These are staff members who are responsible for enforcing program policy, supervising the tutoring sessions, supervising the reporting and management at each Center; some supervise Center Assistants as well. The Center Directors used to participate in the full staff meetings; now, with a Coordinator on staff for the Center Directors, they meet as a group weekly, and with the full staff only once a month. Ms. Jefferson, a Center Director, assesses that, "Even though it's not written down policy, there has been consolidation of a certain amount of power for us as Center Directors in that we have more of the input into policy." Ms. Harward, in the same conversation, adds, "I think that the fact that we meet collectively as a body makes a difference as far as that goes," and the others in the group agree. Ms. Jefferson continues, "I think that just meeting regularly as a group and having one voice makes our voice stronger." These Center Directors understand empowerment as collective power rather than personal power through access and influence. The Center Directors agree that their Coordinator on the central office staff is a strong advocate for them with the program administrators, and that this structure serves them well.

A look in some depth at the evolution and enforcement of one specific policy provides us with some insight into how the power of the Center Directors is used; the new attendance policy supplies us with such a case. The policy essentially says that students are allowed only a certain number of absences per month; after that point they can be placed on a "trial period" or can be suspended from the program for three months. Although no one in the group of Center Directors could definitively identify the origin of attendance as a policy issue or whether there had been a prior policy, some of the Center Directors remember hammering out the new policy in meetings of the entire staff which included dissension, discussion and, eventually, consensus. They also believe that the Student Committee played some role, although they do not know whether the Student Committee raised the issue to the staff or simply endorsed the final recommendations.

Center Directors agree that responsibilities such as enforcing the attendance policy are stressful. For example, one Center Director explains: "I find it difficult in a lot of ways, because there are a lot of gray areas... and there's certain kinds of discretion as far as what the Center Director can do." Each Center Director handles it differently. One Director says, "I choose to see it as an opportunity a lot of times to sit down with a student and see what can be worked out.... Some people consider it to be punitive and don't understand why there's an attendance policy and for all the talk about how their presence or absence affects the group -- really either don't identify or just can't get it together." Another Center Director says,

> I enforce it really two ways.... One, is to say to a person who I think is not coming enough to learn anything, that I have to be honest that they're not coming enough to learn anything and if I let them do it, in a year they could come back and be very angry with me [because they haven't learned what they wanted to

> learn]…. And if they say, well, for the next three months I'm going to be working overtime and I can only come in four times in a month, if they're a certain kind of person that I think, 'Well, are you reading at home ?... You can maybe come if you're doing so much extra work, then I can be convinced.' If I can be convinced, then I let them come in four times a month for the next three months.

This Director explains that she feels she knows the students in her Center pretty well, but still, she says, "I don't doubt that I make mistakes." She continues to muse, "We have a population that's gonna learn and a population that's not and there are some I think that may not learn but will get something out of it, and it's a very tough decision for me, but it seems to me that I have to decide the people that will learn... and this puts me in a very powerful position. But I make decisions like that."

Another Center Director agrees that enforcement of the policy is on an individual basis; she admits,

> I'm not sure as yet what my position is on the attendance policy. What I found is the people who are new,.. who come in knowing that we have an attendance policy and who are shaky in attendance... I try not to say, 'Well, it's time to leave or time for you to sort of set your priorities in order.'... They want to be there -- they want to feel that they have accomplished something, especially for those people who are new. For the people who have been there for a long time, those are the people I tend to be much harsher with in terms of what are the expectations, what are their priorities? And, I find with them that they recognize the limitations of the program.... It seems almost pointless to go through this with them.... They're generally the people who are in retirement. who have no intention of getting a GED or whatever. This is a social kind of activity which is also for their benefit.

She adds that she thinks that these are often persons whose lives will not be greatly influenced by literacy skill improvement. She believes that they feel, "Before I got into Literacy Volunteers I was quite functional and competent and you have taught me that well -- that I was a functional adult in spite of my illiteracy.... Even if I stay away for the three months that you're giving me,.. what have I lost?" "Younger people, that's a different issue," she adds. "There's future, there's potential, hopefully, that he can move on to another program and you could see where enforcing a policy makes a difference for them, but for the older people it's like really fuzzy, you know."

"I find that the attendance policy really makes a big difference if you enforce it very stringently," another Center Director claims.

> If you let it go for awhile, people forget about it.... It's like you have to be on their backs constantly.... It makes you wonder about, you know, why are they even there if they're not getting enough out of it in the first place.... I have found that when I enforce it, it really pays off. And, when I try to get groups and tutors to enforce it also, just like I'm just making students accountable -- making them call when they're not going to be in – and when people do that and when a group goes along with that logic, it really pays off, and it helps the whole group identity or whatever.

The Center Directors do not see this as a punitive responsibility, but rather as one of making sure that students understand the relationship between their attendance and their progress. One Director comments:

> It's something that has to be done.... Some people just have life-circumstances where they miss all the time and they can't help it. The kids are sick and they have to do this or do that.... I think it's our responsibility to let these people know that no matter how good their intentions are, when they start missing half the classes in the month, they're not going to learn.... This kind of lack of continuity just is not going to get you anywhere, so we recommend that you take a leave of absence until you could change the situation. And that kind of throws it back to them.

Ms. Holden, a Center Director, says passionately,

> It's for those people who are trying to change your life and there are so many obstacles and then we're presenting yet another thing.... These are people who cannot prioritize because every bloody thing is important to them. Money is important. Having somebody to take care of their children is important. Having to go into their children's school is important.... They cannot say, 'OK, for these three months I'm going to do everything for my kids... so that in the next three months I'm going to be able to focus on education.' They cannot do these things. So when we're asking them, 'OK, you take time out and get your life in order and then you could come back to us,' this is like, throwing water in their face. I'm trying to do something for myself and then you tell me that.... For those people who are really serious, who you see are enthusiastic, and who are really making that effort, I think for those people we need to be very lenient as opposed to being very inflexible in terms as what is it we're trying to enforce in terms of the policy.

Ms. Jefferson agrees that, "I enforce it pretty strictly, but I also take into consideration some of the things that [Ms. Holden] was talking about.... And, we do have a lot of leeway as directors to make decisions.... But I do come down pretty strictly. I tell people that it's an opportunity." And another Center Director says simply, "If you're too lax about it, people will be very lax about it. So if you set higher standards and expectations, they're gonna think. They'll try a little harder."

The Center Directors add that they also feel responsible to the groups who get upset when members do not come and do not call on a regular basis. They want the Center Director to take some action. Ms. Jefferson attests that, "But when [students] don't let us know, when you don't let your group know, that's when the anger and resentment builds up. That's when I get the feedback of people grumbling and I have to talk, you know, then I have to talk."

The attendance policy is a source of tension for students as well. Although everyone we spoke with supports having some kind of policy, its enforcement remains difficult. Some students told us of students who were suspended even though other students in the Center felt it was an inappropriate response, and the threat of suspension can add a new level of stress to students' lives. For example, Ms. Alvarez explains her understanding of how her status in the program is vulnerable because of her children's illnesses:

> My youngest son is always getting sick a lot.... On Thursday night, he had diarrhea; he had like a low grade fever.... And my other oldest son was sick, too.... I call [one of my tutors] to let them know I would not be able to come in because I think it was week before last that they were telling now they're getting the people that who sort of missed like 2-3 times in a month and I know if they continue missing out, that they're going to kick me out of the group. And I don't want that to happen to me.

Some students see the Center Directors as their advocates; they have had positive experiences with responsive Directors. For example, Mr. Garcia asked the Center Director if he could change groups because he felt his group at that time was not "doing things seriously enough;" his Center Director responded positively and he is happier in his new group. And Mr. Hopps' description of how he views his Center

Director is common among the students we spoke with; he says that his Center Director,

> tell us when we came the first day, she told us that if we are not happy with our tutor, let you know, because she is here to help us.... If we do not like our tutor and if we think we can not learning anything, then she should know. And if there is a group that we associate with better, let you know. And she will see what she can do.

Some students, however, are concerned about how the Center Directors are using their power. For example, Mr. Guerrero feels, "The way they talk to other students and they treat them like if they're children.... They don't give the students a chance to make the decision, you know.... They tell them, 'Listen, if either you do like this or you have to do this.'"

Ms. Knowles' Center Director has not been sufficiently responsive, in Ms. Knowles' estimation. She had made friends in her previous group. After the Center Director reorganized the groups, she asked to be reunited with her friends. However, she asserts that the Center Director,

> wouldn't let us. He put all of us in a different group.... [He] probably figured that I needed to get in another group more. I said that's not so, but he didn't say nothing.... We asked to get back together.... He say, 'I'll see about it.' But he didn't see about it. So I said, 'Maybe for the best.'... Because, you know, I have learned more this way. So I guess he figured this group here would be the best for me.... So everybody's in a separate group.... I'm getting used to the peoples, you know, and they're nice.... [But] I really miss that table and the group of peoples. But I'm getting used to this. I have to learn to live with it. That's what I say. I have to learn to deal with it.

Students often cast the Center Director in the role of "enforcer." For example, Ms. Rourke describes:

> When we first started in a group my tutor was wanting to teach the different ways than what [the Center Director] wanted, and that became a problem. We was reading a newspaper and they couldn't do that anymore because she didn't want us reading from the newspaper or she said that's not the way it goes.... It wasn't a problem to us.... At that time [the students] were upset because they enjoyed reading the newspaper.

When asked if she understood why the tutor seems to have been asked to change instruction, Ms. Rourke replies: "No. It's not the way [the Center Director] wanted the program to go; it doesn't work like that."

And Ms. Gomez, who has left the program, remembers, "I used to open my mouth and [the tutors] called me a big mouth and told me that I would cause trouble.... They put me down. They wouldn't let me talk.... The first time I complained to [the Center Director] she told me to leave and to come back when I got my problems worked out.... She suspend me, she suspend me for no reason." Ms. Gomez offers a little more explanation:

> She said to me, 'Maria, you got a lot of problems, you talk too much, you don't listen, and I think because of the problems that you have, you come in here all bent out of shape.' Because at that time my son was quitting school and doing things and I say, 'This, to me, is therapy. This helps me. How can you tell me to leave? You should tell me to stay.'...She told me to leave and to come back in three weeks....She told me to take off and to come back there with a clear mind.... They get afraid because they know I have a big mouth.

Ms. Gomez took the time off but, when she returned, she felt that, "they treated me cold, even my tutor.... I like to talk to people, I'm a friendly person. They was different to me.... So I decided... I don't need this. I left." Ms. Gomez remains bitter, however, vowing: "I want to see their face when I learn to read and write and I go back and tell them they don't have no right to treat people like they treat me."

When asked why he changed groups, Mr. Paynter replies,

> I didn't, [the Center Director] did because he thought that I was more faster and like they was more slower. And so in a way.... I saw that, but I didn't mind because I didn't think I was that much faster than them.... I think that if I had stayed, I think that my reading would have gotten more and more up. 'Cause now I'm not really getting the help with my reading and it's like I sit there, and I sit there, and I sit there and, you know, reading a book.

Mr. Paynter has spoken to his Center Director about his displeasure with his tutor's approach to teaching. According to Mr. Paynter, the Center Director, "say he gonna speak to [my tutor] about it. Like sometime, you know, I don't want to say nothing [to my tutor] because I don't want to hurt nobody's feelings." Mr. Taylor simply feels ignored; he asked his student representative and his Center Director if the program could increase from two to three days a week but, "I don't know what ever happened to that. I put it in, but I never heard nothing."

Center Assistants. There are a couple of Centers in which the Center Assistant is a former student in the program. The staff members in these positions talk about the difficulties they have getting the appropriate respect from the tutors in their Centers, at times. This discomfort is supported by the comments we heard from some tutors. For example, one tutor comments,

> I would never feel comfortable going to [the Center Assistant] because I don't, I guess, I hate saying this, but I'm going to anyway -- I feel like [the Center Assistant's] social skills and kind of the skills necessary to be in a position of that kind of authority are things that [the Center Assistant] doesn't have yet. So I honor the fact that we are giving [the Center Assistant] this chance and that [the Center Assistant has] got this opportunity to work and I see it as a part of the program philosophy to continue that and if [the Center Assistant is] immediately valuable to our director that's terrific.

Another tutor, however, added in the same conversation, "But as a resource to the students I think it's very helpful," and the first tutor agreed, adding "It might be a role model, possibly." The second tutor adds that the Center Assistant has been a resource to tutors as well, being "helpful to me when I need just some information or want to drop something off but it has just been in routine things." Back to the first tutor, who continues clarifying, "They are second in charge, which puts a funny situation on people who probably under other circumstances wouldn't get that job." The tutors continue this conversation, finally agreeing that they feel many of the tasks done by the Center Assistants who are former students are for their own learning and development rather than because they are serving the Center Directors, the students, or the tutors. These Center Directors did not refer to a formal job description; Center Assistants as well as Center Directors seem to be confused about whether the Center Assistants are performing adequately in the jobs for which they were hired, or whether they were hired because they are former students, regardless of whether they can do the job.

Power, Staff and the Central Office. Students also see former students on the staff as the Student Leadership Team in the central office. The two persons on this team visit the Centers, do special workshops, assist in student orientation and tutor training, and, sometimes, do some tutoring as well. It is an opportunity to, "Create your own job," according to one member of the Student Leadership Team. "You can't wait for someone just to tell you, because people ain't got time to tell you." One former student now on staff says that students will "come to you knowing that you are a student, even though you are a student outside the program, and they'll complain. And expect you to look at this, if they have a problem with something and will ask you to solve it. They will come to you quicker than they'll come to [the staff] because they feel students can speak better than a staff person." This staff person then goes to the Center Director to see if something can be worked out.

The Student Leadership Team has been developing separately from the Student Committee; the students on staff have not had a regular role in Student Committee meetings or in training student representatives. This seems to reflect the position of the larger organization, which has had a kind of "hands off" policy toward the Student Committee, according to one student on the staff. Some other staff members from the central office also are very familiar to students; the Executive Director travels periodically to Centers to answer students' questions, and the Education Director and other staff also travel to Centers to do tutor and student training or to respond to specific problems. Students also know the staff who are involved in student orientation.

The final level of authority is the governing board; there is one student representative to the board, and representatives of the Student Committee participate in the identification of students to be suggested to the board nominating committee. At the time of this study, the student on the board is not allowed to vote on personnel, financial or legal issues, so it remains a nominal position.

Students feel that there are certain policies of Literacy Volunteers of New York City that are not open to discussion. Three different students, in separate conversations, reported to us that they were told that, "You can't change the policy." One student representative reports being told, "You can't change the system. The system is that way. You don't have no power to change the system." A few of the students we spoke with feel that they really do not have an advocate they can trust. They feel that the Student Leadership Team (on staff), as well as the Center Directors are advocates for the program's policies first, and students' opinions are a far second. They feel betrayed by this, to some extent, because the program's philosophy of being responsive to students and involving students in decision-making is so public. When they are being pushed in a particular direction, they feel the coercion often is subtle and indirect, making effective response difficult. Staff members on the Leadership Team feel this tension as well. One staff member explains: "You're caught in the middle between students. I always get this feeling that students will say, 'Well, you know where I'm coming from, you'll be on my side.' And then I'm a staff member and it's not that way. You have to go over to this side and so it's very uncomfortable.... I have to do what I have to do; that's just the way it is." "I'd much rather be supportive to the students," this staff member continues, "but I can't do it like that. They feel betrayed."

Former students who are now in staff positions, either as Center Assistants or on the Student Leadership Team, feel some tension in their relationships with other staff members as well. Some of the students and staff we interviewed said that the students on staff were "tokens," without the same kind of authority and skills that other staff members have. At the same time, the former students on staff admit that there are many things they need to learn and that the other staff members are not paid to teach these skills to their colleagues. There is confusion about how the students on staff are to learn the skills they need, and whose responsibility it is to help them learn. One former student says that the staff are "overprotective" of students in leadership positions. All of the students and former students in leadership positions talk about the importance of getting honest feedback on their performance from the staff. As one former students on the staff summarizes: "[Staff] pats you on the back for everything you do, whether you do it right or wrong. How can I learn if you don't correct me when I'm wrong, OK? I'm going to keep on thinking that what I'm doing wrong is right." These staff members feel that they get mixed messages from other staff: "They re-affirm it and then they take it away. 'I know you can't do this, but yes you can do this.'... You see, you get confused.... You're coming and going like an escalator... up and down, up and down. You don't ever really know where you're at."

There also is tension around mobility. As one staff member explains,

> I feel in many ways, we're being cheated, because when I leave this program, where can I go really, what credentials do I have to go get a job someplace else? Unless I fill out an application to go work in a hospital, go work in a restaurant. That's about the basic things I can do. But if I really want to continue in the education field, there's nowhere I can go and I don't have the education, I don't have the learning.

"I don't like to make trouble": Students' silence

Literacy Volunteers of New York City attempts to maintain an open atmosphere in which students will feel comfortable talking about their dissatisfactions as well as their accomplishments. However, social norms, experience, and feelings of vulnerability combine to inhibit some students' expressions of dissatisfaction with their tutoring. Mr. Guerrero explains his situation,

> Sometimes I feel that when you get to know a tutor personally, you tend to not talk negative about them and you're afraid to say sometimes that they are not doing this right... and you got to know the tutor so well that you're afraid to speak about the tutor. Now, I got an open relationship with my tutor -- I tell her and we compromise and we'll talk about it... but a lot of students are afraid to speak about that.

Mr. Jordan's comments, in another conversation, are similar: "some of the people, they are afraid to talk.... Some people, they don't talk about nothing and everything is yes, yes, yes and I couldn't see that."

Ms. Ferguson admits that, "When it got to the point that things weren't working for me, I sort of stayed on the track of being grateful and not speaking up." She believes it is connected to prior schooling experiences. She explains,

> People that have gone on through school, they know the routines of the school system and you didn't have a voice. You had no voice at all. You just had to do what they told you, no matter what.... And then, you know, when you come to a program like this and they give you freedom of speech and everything, they feel that if they speak too much, then that's going to penalize them.

A student states that some students who speak up critically,

> I would say they just ignored. They won't be penalized, but things will change for them in the program, I think.... They'll be moved around.... But like we have a student now that's very vocal and says this and says that and I noticed that he gets ignored a lot. And he gets pushed in a corner like with a tutor that he's not very happy.... Maybe in that way, he gets penalized and people don't realize. And people, you know, 'He doesn't know what he's talking about,' that kind of an attitude.

Ms. Knowles' group had a meeting with their tutor and the Center Director to discuss how their new group would operate. They talked about the importance of students helping each other, and they shared information about their goals. Discussing the meeting later, Ms. Knowles admits that she did not express her feelings openly at that meeting. She explains,

> I wouldn't dare 'cause I don't know what's been going on. I don't know what's happening.... I don't know what [the Center Director] gonna do with it. Whether

> it will get back to -- but that's one thing I always was worried about -- what I said about peoples, you know. I don't like to make trouble.... If I say something gonna make trouble for somebody, then I don't want that, even though it might benefit me, but I'll feel bad about it. But if, like if it get too much, then I have to say something. And not unless I have to.

Ms. Knowles was feeling that the tutors were not helping her learn the things she wanted to learn, but she didn't say anything because, "I didn't want to hurt [my tutor's] feelings."

As a student representative, Mr. Guerrero tries to encourage students to talk for themselves:

> One of the frustration that also a student rep. gets, when you feel like you're talking and talking and nobody's listening to you and you say, 'What am I doing this for?' Then you come back and you say, 'Oh well, just another day,' and you talk about it again and talk about it again... until I feel that there are more people listening and more people listening and I think that is one of my problems in my site that is happening [is that students] don't usually speak out, they usually come to me to speak and I try to teach them not to do that, to speak more.

Summary and Discussion

We believe that the staff of Literacy Volunteers of New York City engages in the Student Leadership Program in good faith; they are making sincere efforts to develop a program that will help students develop a more proactive stance in relation to their own schooling and, perhaps, in their lives outside the program. Nonetheless, students operate in a complex web of power and authority relationships within which they appear to remain dependent on the good faith of professional paid staff. Students bring their experience of power relationships outside the program, and their sense of themselves as relatively powerless and stigmatized. Although they come to feel safe inside the program in terms of allowing others to know about their skills limitations, the larger issues of empowerment that would support open expression of their feelings and experience do not seem to be addressed on any systematic basis. Power and authority remain firmly in the hands of the paid staff and, secondarily, the predominantly middle-class tutors. Students seem to maintain a culture of silence about power relationships that differs little from that on the outside.

The staff in the central office do not appear to have decided which policies are open to negotiation and which are not; this creates a fundamental underlying tension. In addition, while the program has created structures for student involvement, the processes for operating within those structures are not developed, leaving students vulnerable to how staff and tutors exercise their discretionary authority.

Staff members' and students' lack of experience with nontraditional power relationships is reflected in the tensions apparent in many comments in this and preceding chapters. We also see the classic tensions around risk and security, such as students wanting to be able to stay in the program but not wanting to be overprotected. If Literacy Volunteers of New York City staff decides to move forward with developing the Student Leadership Program, it will involve trying to change deeply internalized attitudes and beliefs that have served to structure relationships between persons from different classes and degrees of power for a long time.

THE STUDENT COMMITTEE

The Student Committee is made up of two elected representatives from each of the nine instructional programs who meet monthly to (a) exchange ideas and information from their centers, (b) set goals toward the greater good of students, and (c) share in the overall functioning of LVNYC. The Committee also selects candidates from their membership for election to the Board of Directors. Two student representatives are elected by each Center for two-year terms on a rotating basis. The Student Committee has organized trips to national conferences where students make presentations, and representatives have presented programs at LVNYC Centers on such topics as AIDS, Black history, and racism.

The Student Committee is the main mechanism for students at the separate Centers to participate, through representation, in program-wide processes. According to one person we interviewed, the Student Committee was created to support students being involved in activities such as speaking engagements and orienting new tutors and students. From there, the roles of student representatives as well as students on staff developed relatively organically -- people in the roles pushed their boundaries and continuously defined and redefined the functions.

"We being nice": Inside the Student Committee

The chairperson of the Student Committee is a student. She was initially concerned that the Student Committee become a forum for discussion rather than argument. She states, "At first I really did not want to be on the student committee and we got into having meetings for two hours, sometimes 2 and a half hours, and we would like sit there for the whole time and argue. I think we were just seeing who could argue the loudest and that's what it was all about." She continues: "The first meeting we had when I became chairperson.... We cut out the argument. That was the first thing I told them. I said, 'Hey, you're not going to have any more arguments. Any arguments come up, you settle them someplace else.'"

Representatives try to bring issues to the Student Committee that arise from their conversations in their Centers, such as problems with attendance or setting up meetings at their Centers; they see the Student Committee as an arbiter in difficult situations. For example, Mr. Shabazz had a problem at his Center and he discussed it with the Committee. He explains, "See, when you have a problem you bring it to the Committee and they give you the final decision and you can take it back."

Some students involved with the Student Committee are frustrated with its agenda, feeling that it does not take up the "real" issues. One student, referring to a consultant that the staff hired to support the student representatives, comments, "I think the organization's idea was to get this woman in to stop the arguments, for people to start listening to each other. Now they're listening but ain't nobody saying nothing.... We being nice." This issue of the Committee's agenda is quite heated. One student says he wants the Committee to "work on some concrete stuff, not just dances, not just having a picnic, because there's a lot of stuff the students can do and Student Committee is not getting at those things."

Decision making in the Committee has been confusing. There are no clear guidelines for what decisions come before the committee, the procedures for examining issues, or the mechanisms for making decisions that reflect the group. There is debate about the power and authority of the chairperson and the relationship between the committee and the Student Leadership Team on the staff.

It seems that the Student Committee has become an arena for intra-group politics among the students, in some cases. A couple of students feel that their concerns had been ignored in the Student Committee; one former student suggests, "I think what happens is that when the students raised the issues that don't correspond with the feeling of certain people in the organization who have that kind of little inner power there, they make the person look kind of like -- the Student Committee turns against them and then it gets squashed."

Another student representative finds that,

> Being a leader you find yourself more of a loner, and you will feel it. Because like even with this committee, a lot of times I come and I can feel the tension here and I say, 'Gee what did I do,' and I say I didn't do nothing, I just opened my mouth and said what was on my mind, but you do feel there is jealousy around and I guess that's natural but one thing you have to do, I feel you just have to learn how to deal with that and being on the Student Committee I have learned how to deal with it.

The staff seems to be having a difficult time, torn between wanting to respect students' autonomy and feeling that they might need help understanding the dynamics of their situation. The Student Committee has no membership from the staff, but its relationship to the staff is essential. With no written policies about processes and procedures and no clear authority, the committee depends on the staff to implement its decisions or move its issues from the committee to other forums. A case in point is Ms. Kay's situation. She finds that "this way I don't get my studies," because she is meeting with students at her Center individually all the time. The chairperson of the Student Committee is upset to hear about this because this matter had been discussed and settled earlier -- or so she thought. She concludes: "It seems that we are having our Center Directors saying one thing and doing something else.... It does happen and we can't have that.... The way we normally do it, we talk about it in the meeting in which [a staff member] takes the notes for us and when things is not right she goes back to the office and she is supposed to take care of it."

"I'm gonna give it my best": Student representatives

Students in each Center elect two representatives to the Student Committee. Interest in the process of electing student representatives varies from Center to Center, but it never is particularly excited or passionate. Almost all of the student representatives who spoke with us were convinced by someone else to run for student representative. Mr. Kirk, for example, says, "I didn't want to be involved, I just wanted to come and learn how to read and that's it. They nominated me last year and I coaxed somebody else to run with me and they chose her because I voted for her.... So another year came by and [I was] coaxed... into it." Mr. Daniels and Ms. Kay, in the same conversation, agree with Mr. Kirk; they have similar experiences. Ms. Gardena, also "coaxed" into running for election, goes into a little more detail:

> I didn't want it and to tell the truth right now I still don't really want it, but since I'm in it, I will give it all, because, like, I have been a leader before. Because in my church I also do so, to be able to help somebody else you got to help yourself so that you will know how to help someone else when they need that help.

"I didn't really want to be a rep," Ms. Gardena continues, "because I felt that I wanted to learn more about reading and writing and I don't want to take that away from me, because I'd rather do my reading and my study that I don't have to have my mind clouded with other things, but since I am here, they voted me in, I'm gonna give it my best."

All of the student representatives we spoke with describe two major parts of their responsibilities in addition to attending Student Committee meetings: 1) holding student meetings at their Centers and 2) talking informally with students, particularly those who are new. Although they talk about being "leaders" without a clear definition of what that means, they all to see it as an important responsibility. Ms. Kay, for example, explains that she talks with students about, "what out of the program... that they are getting... is most important to them." Similar to other student representatives, she also tries to greet all of the new students in her Center. Ms. Owen, another representative, explains that it is important to meet new tutors and students because, "The first day I go I was scared -- most people that come in, you scared. You want somebody to talk to you, to tell you every little thing, to keep your hopes up, not to be scared."

It is problematic to set the limits for this kind of responsibility. One student representative explains: "I always tell [students] you can talk to me, tell me any problems you have as long as it concerns the site, but don't bring me something big that I can't do anything about." Mr. Daniels is very clear about his boundaries: "I don't believe in getting involved with [the students'] personal lives.... I wouldn't mind the situation inside of the classroom but whatever they got going on on the outside is basically not my business.... I didn't figure that that was suppose to be part of the student rep. situation."

Many of the student representatives talk about feeling responsible for supporting other students' motivation; Mr. Shabazz takes a bit of an authoritarian tone: "When

I don't see some students one night I wait by the door for them... to talk to them about what is going on exactly. 'What are you doing? Do you want to come here or do you want to drop out?'" And Mr. Daniels tries to help maintain some mutual respect and good study conditions at his Center:

> At my site I got some new guys that just came in. They sit at the same table I sit at and occasionally they gives me a hard time and as a student rep. I'm trying to get them where they can let everybody else study.... I'm trying to get them to quiet down and almost every time I see them I almost like want to get into a fight with them and I try to keep myself totally composed and continue doing my reading to get it good, because at times I really want to hit them.

Mr. Guerrero's concept of representation has to do with being the "voice" for others:

> To me a student rep. is... for the students. I represent the students and it's more of understanding what's the program all about, giving reports to the students, asking the students what do they think? What could help them better in their process of learning reading and writing?... To try to be more like a leader to a degree, where I can help someone to be a leader also, and make them understand that it's not just reading and writing, it's communication, you know, to communicate with one another, to learn how to speak and understand each other, and to get your point across.... I got into it because I felt that a lot of the students that can't speak up and don't know how to speak up and they can speak up through me, so basically that's what I think a student representative stands for.

Mr. Guerrero also hopes that the system of student representatives, "could help students really see theirselves and see that everybody could be leaders."

Student meetings at the Centers sound like they can be pretty painful experiences. One student representative describes her first meeting, for example:

> Nobody wanted to talk. Everybody was just sitting there looking at me ... so I said, 'Listen, if I'm going to represent you, you got to help me -- talk to me, tell me things that you don't like, things that you like, and things that you would like to have. The only thing they could come up with were books, different kinds of books, and that's what I took to the meeting.

Many tutors, students, and even Center Directors feel that student meetings interfere with tutoring. A former student comments,

> It interfere when students have meetings at the centers because they don't have nothing to say. 'Let's have a meeting.' What you gonna say to them? Nothing

> else we can tell them and the reason why is because the student don't know the issues. The person who represents them don't know what the issues are.... They don't know what to talk about when they go to the meetings, they don't talk about nothing concrete.

At least one student we spoke with felt the meetings, were important, however:

> In gaining strength, they give you the opportunity to take part in different things. You're also given the opportunity to speak as freely as you could. And that makes a big difference. You know, just that you have been sitting back for so long and here we have a student group that we can discuss things and say that we don't like that tutor. We can also discuss things and say which tutor is good.That give you sort of a power.

One responsibility of student representatives is to identify the students' "needs" at their Centers. Mr. Guerrero explains that if an individual comes to him with a problem, "I see where that person is coming from and to see if the majority feels the same way, then I will speak on it so the majority can understand what I'm talking about and we could all come together." Mr. Guerrero puts a lot of thought into his Center meetings: "What I try to do is try to get the oldest students to speak up more, you know. They been in the program a long time, tell the truth, so that way [newer students] can know what's going on and, you know, maybe it will help them in someway. Maybe it will help the program -- if everyone speaks out, they have to listen."

Mr. Guerrero believes that, as a student representative, he has a responsibility to put his personal emotions aside. In addition, he says, "We get caught up in that word 'leader' you understand, and forget. I hear a lot of 'I' and that 'I' could kill you, understand what I'm saying? To be responsible you forget 'I' and think about 'them.'" Mr. Daniels struggles with a similar issue: "It's so easy... to forget where you come from and that's important to remember, where you come from, because if you do remember that, you know, you're able to help somebody somewhat -- not help them, but give them some type of guidance." And Ms. Gardena adds another facet of the responsibility of student representatives: "They are grown mens and women and you can't treat them like a child."

When students invest this much in these roles, they hope for some appreciation and support from other students and staff. Instead, many student representatives describe it as a "thankless job." They feel, like Mr. Guerrero, that they, "don't get all the supports, not all the time." He explains that,

> If you're throwing a meeting, you have to be chasing them to come to the meetings like they don't care. It got to the point where I did get them all together and I told them what am I here for? I need your support.... But you get that negativity sometimes and you try to explain to them, that 'I'm here for you and I don't really have to be here.'... Sometimes you need that support from the staff to say, 'Hey, this is what's happening.' Sometimes it don't happen, sometimes it does, sometimes it don't.

"You can call them a leader of the group": Perspectives of other students

We found that most students who are not student representatives have slight familiarity with the structure; they know that they elect representatives, but they are not sure what that really means. Students who are not student representatives generally said that they understand that their student representatives "take messages over there [to Student Committee meetings] and if there's anything, they bring back." The general understanding is of the Committee as liaison between staff and students, providing a channel for information to flow in both directions. Ms. Knowles explains: "[The student representatives would] have a meeting with us to tell us what had went on over there.... but it was nice, you know.... They trying to get new books and they said if anybody had a complaint or anything to tell them." However, Ms. Knowles admits, "I was back there in the back, so I didn't know what was going on up front. Anybody was arguing? I didn't hear it. I couldn't say nothing." Mr. Walsh's understanding is:

> The students reps, what they do is, they go to the meetings they have in Manhattan, right? And they represent everybody here. They have meetings here sometimes and they ask us what it is we want. And they go back to the meeting and tell them what it is everybody wants here. That is what it is about.... What they speak about in the meeting, she come back and tell us about it.

Mr. Walsh tries to recall what the topics have been at their Center meetings: "We talk about new books.... Because she was telling us that the school in Manhattan has the big library.... and they have more books than us here.... Since we talked about it, I think they get some new books."

And Mr. Ramsey explains, "When you have any functions going on any place it is out of state, there are somebody to represent, you know, the group or the site and they come back and feed back the information we learned and what you can learn from him.... That's about it." Ms. Sharpe's explanation focuses on social gatherings:

> We gonna have like a party or whatever the school have, we go to [our student representative]... and then she'll have a meeting about it and she usually says like, if you have a problem with your school, the group you are in or the teacher you're in, when we have that meeting we usually tell her about it -- what we think, because they do ask us about it.

Mr. Nabil says that when someone is a student representative,

> It's more or less like you can even more or less call them, you can call them a leader of the group, you know.... They're a little bit more advanced than you are.... And they can always add just a little help. Instead of just the tutors, you can go to them, too. And they can help you out, and you're giving them more encouragement by helping you and they say learning at the same time.

And Ms. Mitchell, in another conversation, adds to the list of descriptions: "If you have a problem of something or you come up with any ideas or something like that and you talk to your Student Rep about it and they get together and see if it's worth dealing with and then they put it in action for you."

"It help me to open": Impact on skills

Center Directors and other staff raise serious questions about the student leadership program in general, asking if they are exploiting students, interfering with their reading and writing instruction to be involved in a host of other activities that are tangential to their main goal of developing literacy skills. The difficulty of getting students to run for election for student representative supports the questions being asked about whether students see a benefit for themselves. This benefit could be on two levels; students might identify specific skills they are learning (e.g., literacy, public speaking, or group management) or they might believe that participation in the leadership program improves the effectiveness of the instructional program, leading to enhanced skill development during instruction or enhanced use of skills outside the program. This is a policy issue for the program; the staff have to decide the extent to which they would like to see one or both of these impacts connected to participation in the leadership program.

Mr. Jeffries feels that the program needs to emphasize that this is an opportunity to learn skills in addition to the literacy skills they learn in their tutoring groups -- skills that are just as important for their lives outside the program. He wants students to say, "'Hey, this is something for me. If I can learn how to hold a meeting, I can take this outside . I can go to my church. I can go to my community.'" Ms. Owen, in a separate conversation, discusses this in a way that is consistent with Mr. Jeffries' point; she says, "I'm a student rep., and I like it. It help me to open, to talk to the new students. It help me to welcome them, to show them that we are one, and we must be nice and good to each other." Ms. Kay agrees, to some extent. She says, "I don't have a chance to get into my studies like I want to,.. but working with the rest of the students here in the program, I am able to help myself better and I am able to help them. So this has advanced me in my life as well."

Another student credits serving on the Student Committee with helping her develop new skills and reinforcing the skills she is learning in her tutoring:

> My voice was always very soft and everybody was always talking over me and I just had to raise up and say what I had to say real quick and get it off and that's what happened, but being on the Student Committee has really changed. I see a change in myself because I talk more and I learn to listen a lot and, like, a lot of things that I always wanted to do, like take a bus trip to Atlantic City, I'll do that and just sit down and read a book, just sit there and read a book without some words I don't know, I write them down, but just to sit there and complete the book. Take me a while to do it but I complete it. That is really something.... The main thing this committee has taught me is to communicate and respect each other.

Mr. Shabazz offers another testimony to learning and the Student Committee:

> Since I became a student rep. my life changed.... I went to conferences. I went to workshops. I learn to read and write much better. I write my own letters to my family back in my country. I achieved a lot from this.... [For example] when [the chair of the Student Committee] give us... the minutes, we call them, for the last meeting. You forget what you have in the last meeting, OK, and when you get minutes you sit down and you doesn't go through line by line, you just go through the basic words that you figure out you know, and then while reading you gather the words that you miss out. I mean, that works for me but I don't know about the other student rep. You know, what I don't know that I can't figure out here, when I reach home or my site my tutor will help me go through briefly, that's how I improved my reading.

"Every time I come here I don't want to open my mouth," Mr. Daniels insists. "I sit here and I listen and it got to the point now I'm willing to open my mouth and try to say what's going on, with no problem. It's more enjoyable. I am a shy person at times. This group here has broken me over my shyness in certain areas."

Many students come to Literacy Volunteers of New York City with leadership experience and skills from their neighborhoods, churches, community organizations, and unions. LVNYC also contracts with a consultant to provide some training and support for the student representatives. Mr. Guerrero hoped that, "being a representative and being in a meeting-type environment and doing it, important meetings and stuff like that -- I felt I was going to learn a lot from it. I didn't. I already knew already." But, Mr. Guerrero says, he learned some skills from the consultant: "She would explain how to stop and explain different ways so that I could get somebody to understand what I'm saying.... She was like a little reminder -- how to be cool about things. So she helped me out a lot about that." The program also is providing some training in areas like public speaking so that students who do things like speaking on television or to the media will feel more prepared.

The staff believes that many students need some kind of training when they get involved in the Student Committee. As one former student representative explains,

> When I joined the Student Committee, my feeling was that this is great. I see some insight in how students could help the organization.... This is great. But when I got there and I realized there were students who had never been in a meeting like this before -- who had never participated in anything. And they were scared.

The program has learned that, "If people going to be involved, you got to train people. You can't put people in situations and say, 'Go to a meeting.' It's scary as hell. I go to the meeting, I don't know what to say. So I sat down. You're telling me to report back to what's going on in my Center? I don't know what's going on in my Center. All I know, people are reading and writing."

Programmatic change

Students do not believe they influence program-wide policy, but they try to make changes in their Centers' operations. For example, Mr. Hines is a former student and former student representative. He was very active in his Center and on the committee, and he enjoyed it. In response to his understanding of students' needs, he recalls,

> I started up a study table for the students. I used to bring magazines in and dictionaries, pads and stuff that the tutor would come and sit with them, because a lot of students could come and sit by themselves so they had tables that they would come, sit down, and have maps and other things to talk about, different things whatever they wanted, and I thought that for a while that was good. But after a while, I was in the Transition Group and nobody would take care of it, the bulletin board and the other things I use to do, so it faded away after awhile.... No one wanted to be bothered but while it was there, it was good and everybody was taking part.

Mr. Guerrero provides another perspective on the problems of authority, power and the relationships between staff and students. He explains,

> I got into student representative because I like to be a leader.... I get a kick out of that. I get a kick out of being someone that helped other people.... I always was a leader since I was young.... I think I already know [how to be a leader].... Maybe not the way they want you to do it. My way.... [LVNYC] have a lot of rules [about] what you can't do and what could you do.... Policy. I'm more open and I'm willing to speak.

For example, Mr. Guerrero continues,

> They will ask me for my opinion, 'What do you think about what we should do to this,' and I give them my opinion.... And they would look at you and say, 'Hmm, it's a good idea but we're not going to do this because this is the way, it's set up this way.' So why you ask me? You know, that's the way I see it. Why did you ask me? How could I be a leader and try to help the students.

And, in a separate conversation, a former student who is now on the staff asserts: "Let's be honest.... You'll always be educated and I'll always be a student. No matter what position they give me, I'll always be what I am right now, a student who learned how to read and write."

Establishing a relationship between talk and action seems to be one of the challenges facing the Student Leadership Program in general. As one of the members of the Student Leadership Team explains, "It's a small little grassroot movement, shaking the ground, so to speak, as people is getting a little more aware of what some of their strengths are. It's a slow process.... We need to be creative."

Summary and Discussion

Students appear to have two different concepts of leadership roles reflected in the ways they talk about the role of student representative. One group seems to view leadership in terms of personal authority; they have an enhanced status among the students in their Centers and they seem to feel allied with the professional staff for enforcing policy and meeting the program's goals. Other students seem to view their roles as leaders more in relationship to other students; they are channels for students' voices to be heard by the paid staff and they want the possibility of influencing policy.

The Student Committee seems to have the function of conveying information between students and central office staff, as well as organizing social events such as parties and fund raisers. Student representatives express difficulties getting students to run for election, getting students to attend meetings at their Centers, getting

Center Directors and tutors to support meetings, and getting other members of the Student Committee to respond to their ideas. This list suggests that there is something fundamentally undermining the operation of the student representative program.

We can identify some possibilities. First, conveying information is not a very exciting task. It puts student representatives in the position of representing the central office staff as much as they are representing students. The lack of formal processes through which student representatives can effectively represent their constituency means that they can work at affecting change or enhancing their own status only through informal processes, identifying with those in power. The way in which the work of the Student Committee has come to be defined and the lack of formal processes within this structure do not support identification with the students as a source of power. Students may feel this tension; it may contribute to their disinterest in performing in the role and to the ambivalence with which they attend meetings at their Centers.

Center meetings are not places in which real work gets done; they seem to be forums for trading information rather than for identifying and mobilizing around issues. The program appears to embody an individually-oriented approach to problem solving in which someone in authority (such as the tutor or the Center Director) is asked to solve problems for students. Students are not directed to work together with other students, organizing them, to develop approaches to common problems. In this context of individual action, group meetings have no real purpose other than information transfer. As long as the agenda remains fixed around program policies rather than around the students' lives, it is not even clear to what extent students share issues in common that might be appropriate for collective action. As Kahn (1982) asserts, "Over and over we are encouraged to look for individual solutions. We are taught to act as individuals, not as groups. But the truth is that individual action rarely gets things done. It keeps us separated from each other and prevents us from making the really basic changes that need to be made" (p. 13).

The training being provided to Student Committee members seems to reinforce the notion of leadership as discrete skills (i.e., running a meeting, dealing with conflict, etc.) which supports individual rather than group activity. Internal tensions among the members of the Student Committee seem to be viewed as personality problems. However, in this environment students have no formally guaranteed rights; they must find and cultivate relationships with sympathetic staff members, contributing to the development of factions involving students as well as staff.

Traditional concepts of leadership define the leader as the person with a vision who is able to mobilize the group to fulfill that vision. In the process, the members of the group feel secure; the leader solves problems and takes care of the group members (Heifetz and Sinder, 1988). This seems to be the concept of leadership embedded in LVNYC's Student Leadership Program. An alternative, consistent with the work of social action organizer Kahn (1970, 1982) and proposed by Heifetz and Sinder, places the group rather than the leader at the center. In this view, the leader is responsible for mobilizing the group to get *its* work done. The work of leaders in this model is fundamentally educational; leaders must be critical learners who can question the conventional wisdom in a situation, listen to everyone's points of view, help develop new ways of thinking about the issues and of responding, and reframe the situation as it changes (Heifetz and Sinder).

This suggests that LVNYC might involve everyone -- students, tutors and staff -- in re-examining the model of leadership that is implicit in their work. An alternative model in which leaders work with students to help students identify their common issues, fashion responses that bring together the various perspectives in the group, and accomplish work may lead to renewed energy around the program, enhanced learning for everyone, and substantive progress toward change in areas central to students' lives.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City is not clear about what they mean by leadership and leadership development. The structures have been put in place without delineating the processes and mechanisms that provide accountability. Students' rights and the program's expectations are not declared. As a result the students are vulnerable and the structures operate on the basis of personal relationships. The student representatives are in a pivotal position but, as Kahn (1991) observes, "all they can do is pivot around."

CHAPTER 8. "CATCHING MOBY DICK BY HIS TOE": QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter contains information about how standardized tests and writing samples portray students' skill development. We collected information that would be analyzed quantitatively, to complement the qualitative body of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The data for quantitative analysis included students' writing samples taken at different points in their participation in the program, and students' standardized test scores. We agreed to collect data that already were being generated in the program, since students were required to take standardized tests at 50-hour intervals and were writing on a regular basis.

Student Writing Samples

Writing is an important element of literacy instruction at LVNYC. Students have their first writing experience during the orientation into the program. We requested a minimum of two writing samples from as many students as possible with a six-month (50 hour) or greater interval between samples. This interval is recognized and used as a standard for the intervals between test administrations for students.

Three difficulties arose, which required us to make decisions about which writing samples to include in the analysis. One difficulty was getting access to student writing. Although students write frequently, the Center Directors reported that the students didn't always keep their writing with them. Another difficulty was that while there are several steps in the writing process, the samples that were given to us did not consistently represent the same place in the process, from any one student or for all students. For example, we had a rough draft in the student's handwriting for one sample and an edited final typed copy of another piece as that student's second writing sample. In another case all we had were handwritten early drafts. A third difficulty was that many of the samples were written without enough intervening time to show skill development.

For the final analysis we used two pieces of writing each from 56 students, and an average of eight pieces each from another 15 students, for a total of 234 samples of writing from 71 students. Sample content varied widely and included personal narratives, letters, fiction, opinion pieces, and descriptive passages. Personal narratives were the most common, especially for students just beginning in the program. New students' writing samples, often taken from orientation, consisted of descriptions of family, the naming of reading and writing goals, and letters to family members. During the preliminary analysis we made several decision rules about what samples to include and how to proceed with analysis. This is discussed in further detail in the analysis section.

The procedure for collecting student writing samples began by contacting the Coordinator for Center Directors who asked the seven Directors to collect two writing samples with a minimum six-month interval from as many students as possible. By April, after repeating the request, we had samples from less than twenty students. During an interview with the Coordinator for the student Pre-enrollment Program, the Project Director learned that copies of student writing during orientation were kept in the Coordinator's file. The Project Director reviewed approximately six months' beginning writing samples, made copies, and generated a list of the students' names, by Center, who were included in this sample. Working with the program staff, she requested that a recent sample be collected from approximately 199 students -- those in the Pre-enrollment Program sample. We learned that about 49% of these students were no longer in the program or never began the program after orientation. By mid-July, we had collected samples from 117 students; however, over a third of those were not useable because they had no dates, no names, were done over too short a time period elapsed, and/or were too edited. Reliance on the relatively recent Pre-enrollment Program writing samples caused the skew in the length of time the students in the sample have been in the program, compared with the overall student population of the program.

Student Test Scores

LVNYC receives funding from New York City which is administered through the Community Development Agency (CDA). City policy requires that LVNYC administer the Reading (Vocabulary and Comprehension) portion of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to students who score at or above the 3.0 grade level on a reading vocabulary inventory. In addition, at the time of this evaluation LVNYC administers the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) test or the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) test to students who score at or below the third grade level.

Students are tested when they enter the program and, thereafter, at 50 hour intervals. Students with regular attendance at a program that meets bi-weekly for one and a half hour sessions can expect to be tested about once every six months. Test score data are recorded at each of the Centers on handwritten ledger sheets which are submitted to the staff in the central office. Twice a year these data are transferred to forms and sent to the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative in compliance with one of the funding requirements. Additional forms are completed and sent to CDA. The format that LVNYC uses to collect and maintain data is one that is required for reporting to these agencies.

In the final report to the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative, LVNYC listed the number of students served for 12 hours or more in 1989-90 student at 461 and another 200 enrollees who have not yet reached 12 hours. The number of students listed according to LVNYC ledger sheets was higher because of duplication. For example, students who drop-out and return during the same reporting period and students who transfer to another center are listed twice on the ledger sheets. All comparison data between our evaluation sample and the student population were calculated on the 461 figure.

In order to calculate the extent to which students' scores increased (i.e., gain scores), it was necessary to have a minimum of two test scores with a 50 hour elapsed time interval. This criterion was met for 261 students (ABLE: 141 and TABE: 120). There were too few DRP scores to include in the pool. Some limitations of the test scores required further decision rules about what data to include. Limitations included: (a) inconsistency in the time intervals between tests, (b) inconsistency in the documentation of total hours in the program at time of testing which made it difficult to locate where in the career of a student a particular pair of tests occurred, and (c) beginning test scores missing which made it difficult to understand change relative to the student's entry level. The following decisions were made after conferring with the Education Director and with consideration to the questions to be answered.

1. The time elapsed between tests would include 50 plus or minus ten hours. This permitted us to use scores which fell in the ranges of 40 to 60 hours, 90 to 110 hours, 140 to 160 hours, etc.
2. To use students' scores for whom we had beginning test data and total number of hours in the program at time of testing.
3. To compile scores from a representative sample from the pool of available scores which reflected varied grade levels at entry and varied lengths of time in the program.

Our data pool consisted of 114 students who met the above stated criteria. This represents 25% of the student population. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4

Comparison of Sample Test Score Population with LVNYC Population

LVNYC Student Test Score Data*		Test Score Sample Population**
Males	274 (59%)	68 (60%)
Females	183 (40%)	32 (38%)
Unknown	4 (01%)	
Total	**461**	**114**
Length of Time in Program**		
Up to one year	276 (60%)	40 (35%)
Up to two years	91 (20%)	19 (17%)
Two years or longer	33 (07%)	50 (44%)
Unknown	61 (13%)	5 (04%)
Grade Level Entry Score		
Less than 3.0	357 (77%)	89 (82%)
3.0 or greater	104 (23%)	19 (17%)
Unknown	01 (01%)	6 (05%)
Paired Test Scores Available		
TABE	120	51
ABLE	141	63
Terminated	123	12
Transition	20	1

*Data taken from the final report to New York City Adult Literacy Initiative which does not report race and ethnicity for test scores

**Data taken from LVNYC ledger sheets which does not report race and ethnicity for test scores

Our sample for test score analysis has slightly more males and slightly more people entering below the third grade level than in the general population of students, and more diversity in length of time in the program than in the general population. The greatest difference between the sample and the population is in the percentage of students who have been in the program for two years or less. Only 20% of the general program population have been in the program for more than two years, but 48% of our sample fit that description.

The collection of test scores presented quite a challenge to the evaluators and the staff, as well. Test score and attendance information are recorded on forms called "ledger sheets" for students at each of the Centers. There is no centralized computerized data base at LVNYC. CDA keeps a central file on all students in the city, organized according to program. However, they track attendance annually and do not require programs to record the total number of hours a student has been the program over time. The year-end report on testing information is filed after June 31 of every year and because there was a change in personnel, it was almost September before we were able to get access to that information. At that time we opted for the ledger sheets because we were assured they contained all the data we would need. However, the Project Director subsequently needed to request missing data, which required the data manager to go back through past ledgers to generate the information by hand. Because of the time involved to retrieve the data manually, we reduced our sample population in order to have the information for the evaluation report. We had the data which formed the basis of the test score analysis by mid-November.

Everyone in the program was very cooperative and prompt in responding to our requests for data. The difficulty seemed to be related to the current system of data collection and maintenance, negative feelings about the usefulness of the standardized test scores, and a general ambivalence about record-keeping for evaluation of student progress. These issues are discussed in more depth in the recommendations for an internal evaluation system.

Data Management

Writing Samples. We employed a consultant with extensive experience in writing education, adult literacy and writing skill measurement to design a method for analyzing the writing samples and to conduct the analyses. Writing samples were recorded by student, program location, and dates of samples. Samples were collected through July in order to increase the number for analysis. Copies were made of all samples and given to the consultant for review. The consultant worked closely with the Project Director and the Principal Investigator to develop a rubric for analysis and to discuss the analysis as it was in progress.

Test Scores. A consultant was hired to work with the Project Director on the statistical analyses of test scores. Complete test score data were made available by the end of August and were passed on to the consultant who did a preliminary list of students who had more than one test score for the 1989-90 year. As mentioned earlier in the report, further modifications were made to develop a sample for analysis. Three meetings were held with the Project Director to determine the best methods for analysis.

Procedures for Data Analysis: Writing

Evaluation of writing focused on individual student development of those elements of writing most emphasized in instructional sessions (i.e. writing for communication and meaning). The evaluation of the LVNYC writing curriculum consisted of an examination of the written products of that curriculum. The limitation of this analysis was the small number of samples which met the inclusion criteria.

The writing consultant met with the Principal Investigator and Project Director who, in turn, coordinated with the LVNYC Director of Education, to identify the elements of writing to be examined. Possible means of analyzing the writing samples were explored. Holistic scoring (which is used, for example, to score the GED writing test) was inappropriate because it works best when students write on a common topic. The writing consultant generated a scheme, or a rubric, modeled on a variety of writing assessment tools. The specific items on the rubric were based upon the kinds of elements found in the students' writing samples and valued by the staff and the students. For example, items were included which reflected the students' ability to express themselves in meaningful ways, organize their writing, and develop skills in the mechanics of writing. (See Appendix G). Items were grouped into four areas: (a) content and organization for meaning, (b) vocabulary, (c) sentence and paragraph structure, and (d) mechanics. A scoring code was developed on a four-point scale which ranged from 4: "consistent use" to 1: "not observed". The number of words and sentences were included as measures of fluency.

The writing consultant, Principal Investigator, and Project Director piloted the rubric on several writing samples to establish reliability. Changes were made in individual items to give greater weight to the content and organization and vocabulary sections. The weighted areas increased the validity of the rubric by making it more congruent with the emphasis placed in the program on writing for meaning.

We made more finely tuned decisions about what samples to include in the analysis while pilot testing the rubric. We found an increase in scores at a minimum of a four-month interval between writing samples. The writing consultant reviewed the samples and selected two samples per student within an interval range of four months or greater. If a student had more than two samples, two were chosen with the widest possible interval in time. A third decision was to select samples which showed little or no evidence of editing.

A total of 96 samples from 48 students met the inclusion criteria. This represented 68% of the initial available samples and 10% of the total student population. Two levels of analysis were done on the samples. First, the 96 samples were divided into three groups according to length of time elapsed between the samples: (a) 18 students with four to six months, (6) 18 with 7 to 12 months, and (c) 14 with 12 months or greater. Each sample was carefully read and scored by the writing consultant and difference scores were calculated for each student and an average difference score was calculated for each group. A difference score is calculated by subtracting the score on the first sample from the score on the second sample.

A second analysis was done on a subsample in each group, in which one of the samples came from the first month the student was in the program. This allowed us to examine, more directly, the relationship between cumulative length of time in the program and changes in writing scores. This left a total of 66 samples from 33 students (07% of the total population): 13 students in the four to six month group, 12 in the seven to twelve month group, and eight in the more than twelve month group. Average lengths of time spent in the program for each group of students were 5.38 months, 9.42 months, and 16.67 months, respectively. Average difference scores were calculated for each group of paired samples. Findings, interpretations, and recommendations are based on this subgroup of students whose writing was analyzed.

Procedures for Data Analysis: Reading

The purpose for analyzing student test scores is to compare the change in reading scores on a standardized test to the length of time a student spends in the program. For the sample of 114 students, (25% of the total number of students) we knew the date of entry into the program, test score at entry into the program, total number of hours in the program at the time of testing, and most recent test scores, reported in raw score (total number of items correct) and grade level. Reporting scores in terms of grade levels for adult learners has been criticized because of the inappropriate connection of adult test performance to an elementary school model. However, grade level equivalent scores were used for all analyses because this was the only way to make comparisons between different forms of the same test and between different tests. The problem arises when trying to attach meaning to the scores and comparisons.

We looked at the difference between test scores taken when the students entered the program (pretest score) and after the students had been in the program for a while (posttest score). We refer to the difference between those two scores as "gain scores," though, in some cases the difference can be negative, if the posttest score is lower than the pretest score. We identified two major influences on test score gains that we could examine statistically: (a) the skills with which students enter the program as measured on the tests given during PEP and (b) the amount of time a student remains in the program as measured by the cumulative number of hours at the time of testing. In other words, we examined whether students who began at a lower level, for example, made predictably different gains than did those who began at a higher level. Similarly, we looked at whether students who were in the program for a larger number of hours made predictably different gains than did those who participated for a shorter period of time. We could not measure all the other types of possible influences on test scores, but we assumed those influences were randomly distributed among the people in our sample and, therefore, affected the outcomes (posttest scores) in similar ways.

We performed two types of statistical operations on the data. A procedure called a regression analysis was performed on all posttest scores, to look at the relationship between the length of time students were in the program and their gain score. We hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the length of time in the program and an increase in test scores. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) also looks at the relationship between the length of time in the program and gains in test scores, but it is a statistical procedure that takes into account differences in students' reading ability before entering the program. We used the test given during PEP, prior to students' entrance into instruction, as the pretest measure. By examining the relationship between the differences in students' beginning reading ability and their posttest scores, we increased the likelihood that we could identify if gains in ability were due to the the length of time spent in the program and not to chance or the influence of entry level skills.

A third procedure allowed us to group students into categories defined by length of time in the program or entry level test score and grade level gains. The consultant and the Project Director defined the categories to represent the experiences of students in our sample. Length of time in the program was divided into (a) 40-60 hours, (b) 61 to 200 hours, and (c) greater than 200 hours. Entry level scores were divided into (a) 0 to .9 grade level, (b) 1.0 to 2.9 grade level, and (c) 3.0 or higher grade level. Grade level gains were divided into (a) 0 to .9 grade level, (b) 1 to 2 grade levels, and (c) greater than 2 grade levels. Three 3 x 3 matrices of frequency distributions were generated: (a) entry level score by length of time in the program, (b) grade level gains by length of time in the program, and (c) grade level gains by entry level scores. The matrices allowed us to compare numbers of students who "fell" into each of the categories.

It is responsible to stress the small sample size in both the writing task analysis (07% of the student population) and test score analysis (25% of the students) when attempting to make inferences about the program as a whole. When sample sizes are small, individual differences have a greater impact on the results. Differences between students in one group (e.g. students in the program 60 hours or less) may be greater than differences between groups of students (e.g. those in the program 60 hours or less and those in the program 61 to 200 hours). Such differences are known as "within subject error" and make generalized inferences about program effects questionable (Keppel, 1982).

FINDINGS

In this section we present our findings and interpretation of the analysis of test scores and writing samples.

Test Scores

We hypothesized that the longer a student was in the program (measured by the number of hours), the higher his/her posttest scores would be and the greater the grade level gain. In our analyses we examined the (a) relationship between test scores at entry and test scores at a later date (i.e., gains), (b) relationship between the length of time in the program and the test score gains (in grade levels) between the pre and posttests, and (c) the effect of the relationship between the pretest level and a students' length of time on the test score gains (i.e., did students who started at a lower level and stayed in the program a longer time increase their scores more than students who started at a higher level and stayed in the program just as long? what about if they stayed in the program for a shorter time? etc.). In other words, we looked at whether it was possible to predict that students who came in at a particular reading level and remained in the program for a certain amount of time would make a particular amount of gain in their reading skills as measured by the test. These claims are being made for the test sample only.

For the sample of 114 students:

- Average grade level score at entry (pretest) was 1.518 (The standard deviation was 1.3 grade level, which means that the distribution of students' scores is skewed toward the lower end, with a lot difference among the scores).

- Average grade level score (posttest) was 2.4 (standard deviation: 1.3; this distribution is probably slightly less skewed, with a little less difference among the scores)

- Average grade level gain was .9 years (almost a year)

- Average length of time in the program, for the sample, was 229 hours

Although this shows a gain, it was not found to be statistically significant. This means that students made a gain, but the gain cannot be attributed to spending time in the program any more than it can be attributed to other factors. The correlation coefficients (P) were: .42 for hours and score differences and .03 for pretest scores and score differences (See Table 1 and Table 2). "P" represents the strength of the relationship between length of time in the program and posttest scores in Table 1 and between entry level scores and posttest scores in Table 2. P levels of greater than .60 are generally accepted as greater than chance relationships.

Table 1
Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Hours in Program
and Difference Scores (Grade Levels)

	Hours	Diff. Scores
Hours	1.000 (114) P = .	-.0174 (114) P = .427

Table 2
Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Entry Level and Difference Scores

	Entry Level Grade	Diff. Scores
Entry Level Grade	1.000 (114) P = .	-.1734 (114) P = .003

Note: A "." is printed if a coefficient cannot be computed.

The results of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) reveal no statistically significant effects on differences in grade level gains between the pre and posttest scores based on length of time in the program, grade level at entry into the program or the relationship between the length of time in the program and entry grade level score (See Table 3). In all cases the individual differences between students were greater than differences between students grouped together according to length of time in the program or beginning reading levels.

Table 3

ANCOVA Table of Results

Source	DF	Type I SS	F Value	PR > F
Hours	1	0.00003330	0.00	0.9947
Entry Level	28	18.68669427	0.89	0.6299
Hours and Entry Level	17	9.19984579	0.72	0.7734
		Type III SS		
Hours	1	0.38739426	0.51	0.4758
Entry Level	17	10.94648268	0.85	0.6266
Hours and Entry Level	17	9.19984579	0.72	0.7734

P less than or equal to .05 is significant.

In order to understand the meaning of these findings, we generated three matrices of frequency distributions for the sample. In Table 4 we see that almost or more than half of the students in the sample entering the program at a grade level of less than 3 remained in the program longer than 2 years. This is a high retention rate for our sample compared to the program population as a whole. At higher entry grade levels the percentages of students who remain in the program more than 2 years drops sharply. The sample size in these cells is very small, however; we cannot generalize to the overall program.

Table 4
Number of Students By Time in Program and Entry Level Grade Equivalents

		Time in Program (hours)			
		0 - 60	61 - 200	201 -	Row Total
Entry level grade equivalents	Less than 1.0	10 (8.7%)	7 (6.1%)	16 (14.0%)	33 (28.9%)
	Between 1.1 and 2.9	11 (9.6%)	17 (14.9%)	34 (29.8%)	62 (54.4%)
	3.0 and higher	7 (6.1%)	8 (7.0%)	4 (3.5%)	19 (16.7%)
	Column Total	28 (24.6%)	32 (28.1%)	54 (47.4%)	114 (100.0%)

In Table 5 we see that of the 33 students in our sample who entered the program testing below the 1.0 grade level, 48% made gains between 1.1 and 2 grade levels, and 9% have made gains of greater than 2.0 grade levels. 16% of the people who entered at the 1.0 to 2.9 grade level have made 2.0 grade level gains. All 19 students who entered at the 3.0 grade level or above have made 1.0 or less grade level gains, however.

Table 5
Number of Students By Length of Time in Program and Gain Scores in Grade Levels

		Gains in Grade Equivalent Scores			
		0 - 1	1.1 - 2.0	2.1 +	Row Total
Time in Hours	Less than 60	19 (16.6%)	5 (4.3%)	4 (3.5%)	28 (24.6%)
	Between 61 and 200	23 (20.1%)	5 (4.3%)	4 (3.5%)	32 (28.1%)
	200 and up	32 (28.0%)	17 (14.9%)	5 (4.3%)	54 (47.4%)
	Column Total	74 (64.9%)	27 (23.7%)	13 (11.4%)	114 (100.0%)

In Table 6 we see that 24.6% of the sample population have been in the program 60 hours or less. Of these 28 students, 68% made 1.0 or less grade level gains, while 14% made greater than 2.0 grade level gains. 28% of the sample have been in the program for two years. Of these 32 students, 72% made 1.0 or less grade level gains and 13% made greater than 2.0 grade level gains. 47% of the sample have been in the program greater than 2 years. Of these 54 students, 59% have made 1.0 or less grade level gains over the entry level test and 9% have made gains of greater than 2.0 grade levels.

Table 6
Number of Students By Entry Grade Level and Gain Scores in Grade Levels

		Gains in Grade Equivalent Scores			
		0 -1	1.1 - 2.0	2.1 +	Row Total
Grade equivalent at time of entry	Less than 1	14 (12.2%)	16 (14.0%)	3 (2.6%)	33 (28.9%)
	Between 1.1 and 2.9	41 (35.9%)	11 (9.6%)	10 (8.7%)	62 (54.4%)
	3.0 and higher	19 (16.6%)			19 (16.7%)
	Column Total	74 (64.9%)	27 (23.7%)	13 (11.4%)	114 (100.0%)

Discussion and Conclusion. When attempting to examine the effects of participation in the program on changes in students' test scores, we controlled statistically for entry level skills. It is desirable, as part of the statistical operation, to demonstrate a strong linear relationship between the entry level skills and change in test scores (Keppel, 1982). For example, with a strong linear relationship, if we were to arrange the students in order of entry level test scores from lowest to highest, this arrangement would remain relatively stable with the posttest scores. Measuring this relationship permits pre-existing subject differences to be considered when trying to determine program effects. We found a nonexistent relationship (r = .03), which means that differences between students' skills before they entered the program did not predict their subsequent performance on tests. There was a weak relationship between the length of time in the program and positive changes in test scores over time (r=.42); this means that about 18% of the change in scores can be attributed to length of time in the program, while 82% of the change remains unexplained. Therefore, on the basis of this analysis, we cannot state that changes in test scores are any more related to participation in the program than they are to chance differences between students.

Descriptive information of how many students made gains relative to entry level scores and length of time in the program also does not seem to reveal any consistent pattern. While there are indications that students continue to make slight gains in test scores, no clear predictable patterns emerge that permit inferences about program impacts on students as measured by these tests.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative data to strengthen the assessment of program impacts only works when qualitative and quantitative methods are measuring the same thing (Patton,1980). We need to define as precisely as possible what is being measured by each method. For example, to say that changes in reading skills are represented by changes in reading test scores assumes that the tests are measuring literacy skills that are being taught in the program. Students describe the tests as being unrelated to their experience in the program and unrelated to their knowledge about literacy. This means that the validity of the measure is questionable.

We find increases in test scores, but they vary from person to person in a way that defies finding a simple pattern, statistically, and we cannot claim that we know, from the test score data, what substantially influences those increases. This finding is consistent with the small amount of research literature in adult education that examines this issue. For example, in Jackson's study of community-based literacy programs for the Association for Community Based Education, he finds, "The only finding that bears remembering is that self-esteem helps learners in the acquisition of skills and self-determination" (ACBE, 1989, p. 100). Alamprese (1990), after reviewing the literature on standardized test score research, says that, "It is not clear what these gains represent in terms of learner's skills or overall effects of programs" (p. 112).

Most research that talks about grade level gains per hour of instruction does not describe or identify the relationship between what is being addressed in instruction and what is being tested (see ACBE, 1989, for example). When computing gains per 100 hours, researchers tend to project, assuming a linear relationship. Thus, if students have been in the program for 20 hours and gained .3 grade level equivalents, the researcher might present this conclusion as 1.5 grade level gain per 100 hours. Our data from LVNYC, however, show that there is not necessarily a linear relationship, and the figures presented in other studies purporting to show gain over time are highly suspect. In addition, researchers contend that studies have shown a very low correlation between hours of attendance and mean reading gains (ACBE, 1989; Sticht, 1987).

Sticht (1990) supports our students' assertions that their scores may not change (or that gains may actually be negative) because they are approaching the test differently as they develop their skills:

> It is possible... that negative gain may occur because learners on the pre-test do not work at any given item too long, because they think they cannot perform the test task, and so they simply guess at all the items. On the post-test they spend more time on each item because they have new competence and think they should not guess but try to actually comprehend and perform each item. This could lead to more accurate, but fewer test items being completed at the post-test, and hence a negative gain score. (p. 21)

And we cannot discount the potential effect of the difference between LVNYC's approach to instruction and the assumptions inherent in the tests. Lytle and Wolfe (1989) explain:

> There is often a wide gulf between the instruction provided in a program and what is assessed in a standardized test... Sometimes it is a struggle for learners to see the relationship between a multifaceted curriculum and progress as determined by a standardized test.... Still further, the format of standardized tests as collections of passages with questions that have single right answers

> demonstrates a view of reading that denies the possibility of multiple readings of texts or of texts read for a variety of purposes. (p. 45)

This is particularly important in a program such as LVNYC in which the emphasis is on "real-world" use of skills. As Sternberg (1990) asserts, "IQ tests, achievement tests, and academic problems tend to be well-structured. There is a path, and if you follow that path, you're guaranteed a solution.... Despite the fact that test problems and most academic problems are well-defined, very few real-world problems are defined" (p. 37).

Farr and Carey (1986), writing on reading measurement for the International Reading Association, further assert that,

> One of the major problems with the multiple choice format is the insistence on a single correct answer. Recent research has emphasized that reading comprehension is a constructive process and that meaning is as dependent on the reader as it is on the test. Thus, the single correct answer format provides a dilemma for authors of multiple choice tests. Even if a particular answer is agreed upon by a committee of experts, the possibility exists that a creative reader is capable of going beyond conventional implications of the passage to infer a response that is incorrect when measured against the single response anticipated and allowed. (p. 34)

All of these researchers and authors serve to remind us that the test score data should be interpreted with great caution, and should be only one of a multitude of indicators taken into account when assessing the extent to which students are learning.

Writing Samples

Kazemek (1985) argues that adults need long exposure to instruction to become really proficient writers. According to this argument, students should make improvements in their writing throughout their instructional experience. We would expect to see gains in writing scores with time spent in the program.

We computed average difference scores for the first analysis of 48 paired writing samples. The results are displayed in Table 7. Average difference scores are calculated by subtracting the score on the first writing sample from the score on the second one for each individual in each group. Then these individual differences are averaged within each group.

Table 7
Mean Difference Scores by Time and Program

Time in Program	Mean Difference Scores
4 - 6 months	8.29 points
7 - 12 months	7.27 points
More than 12 months	6.57 points

The overall mean difference score for the 48 students was 7.38 points which indicates that students make gains in writing related to length of time in the program. However, it was not clear what these differences represented because we needed to examine students' skills levels at the time of entry.

Therefore, a second analysis was done on a subset of 33 paired writing samples, one of which was done at the beginning of participation in the program. The mean length of time in the program for group one was 5.38 months; group two, 9.42 months; and group three, 16.67 months. Difference score averages for each group were 9.23, 6.75, and 7.5 respectively. (See Table 8).

Discussion. The results of both analyses suggest that rapid gains in writing scores are seen in the initial stages of instruction, but it is less clear what happens after that. One concern is that when such a small sample is used, individual differences have a greater influence on group averages than if there are greater numbers of students. It

Table 8

Mean Difference Scores on Writing Samples
Listed by Sub-areas of the Rubric Scoring Sheet

Student Grouped By Interval Between Samples	Average months in program	Number of words	Number of sentences	Number of words per sentence	Content/ Organization	Vocabulary	Sentence and Paragraph Structure	Mechanics	Total
0-6 months (13)	5.38	35.23	2.46	-.46	4.92	2.46	.69	1.15	9.23
7-12 months (12)	9.42	73.66	6.83	-17.08	3.5	1.5	1.17	.92	6.75
13+ months (8)	16.67	44.13	2.75	11	3.0	1.75	1.0	1.13	7.5

is necessary to look at patterns among the subtests in the writing of these groups of students for a clearer picture of the development of writing skills.

Content and Organization. Assuming that adults enter a literacy program with limited experience with writing, it is likely that their initial writing efforts will be about personal experiences and show little evidence of organization (Kucer, 1986). Thus a second question is whether students begin to write about subjects outside themselves and organize their writing better as they participate in writing instruction. Students in the three groups did, indeed, begin their writing using highly personal subject matter. Early samples tended to be self-exploratory. The LVNYC program encourages students to write about topics that are relevant and meaningful to them. Interestingly, subscores on items which reflect Content and

Organization were the highest overall for all groups of students as could be expected given the emphasis in the program. Student writing was highly individual and there was no evidence in our sample that students wrote on a common topic or collaborated on ideas prior to writing.

There was some evidence of efforts to explore other subject matter. Several samples described events that were important to the writers, such as Nelson Mandela's visit to New York and a literacy awards ceremony. Other samples included fantasy revealing students' healthy imaginations. Content for students in the program for longer periods of time tended to become more diverse. One possible explanation for the observed decrease in the Content and Organization score for students in the latter two groups, therefore, may be that as students begin to expand writing to less familiar topics, their writing may initially look more elementary until they become more practiced. This is an area for further exploration.

Vocabulary, Sentence and Paragraph Structure, Mechanics. Except for the subscore in sentence and paragraph structure which was lowest for the beginning group, the pattern was for the greatest gains to be observed for the beginning group with a slight decrease in rate of gain for the 7 to 12 month group, and then a slight increase in rate of gain for the more than 12 month group, although not to the level of the beginning group. Learning continues to occur, but the rate of change seems to plateau slightly. This phenomenon has been observed in other cases when the change in learning is tracked. It is common for the greatest gains to be seen early in the learning experience and then as the tasks become more difficult and complex and the initial foundation of learning is solidified, the rate of learning decreases and smaller gains are seen. Again because of the small numbers involved, this may also be a phenomena of individual differences that cannot be interpreted to represent experiences for students in the program as a whole.

Fluency and Syntax. It seems reasonable to anticipate that students in a literacy program would initially produce shorter writing samples. Other factors which influence the length of a written piece include subject matter and writing conditions. Analysis of one measure of fluency (number of words) showed a positive relationship between the numbers of words and length of time in the program. Students in the program 7 months or longer wrote more words than students in the program 6 months or less.

Kucer (1986) describes beginning writers as being preoccupied with surface characteristics of text, causing them to be overly cautious and to produce choppy and sometimes disjointed writing. Beginning students can be expected to use little, if any punctuation at first, giving rise to long sentences. As they become more practiced, students can be expected to divide their writing into short sentences. Later, as students learn to write compound and complex sentences, the length of sentences increases. We used the number of sentences and the number of words per sentence as a measure of syntactic control and found differences in the expected directions. Students in the beginning group wrote fewer sentences with fewer words, while the 7 to 12 month group wrote more sentences with few words. The more than 12 month group wrote fewer, but lengthier sentences, suggesting more complex sentence structure and use of punctuation.

Conclusions. Students are making rapid gains in writing competence during the first months of their literacy class experience. Differences in rate of change for students over time may relate to changes in content to less personal topics and increased emphasis on mechanics during editing. Differences may also be a phenomenon of this particular sample of students and not representative of the program as a whole.

Kazemek (1985) criticizes literacy instruction which focuses on surface conventions rather than on deeper elements of meaning and organization. It is important to continue growth by encouraging student writing beyond self-exploration and to attempt different types of writing. Writing is an important avenue by which adults learn. By encouraging writing and by publishing student writing, LVNYC sends a clear message that student writing is valued.

Conclusion

Almost all of the students we spoke with believe that they are developing their literacy skills through their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, although the rate of skill development varies. Their assessment is supported strongly by their narratives, our interviews with their family and friends and the writing samples analysis. It is supported in a much weaker fashion by the results of analyzing the standardized test scores. Skill development in the abstract is not the goal of either LVNYC as a program, or of the students. Students are interested in how they can use their skills in their lives outside the program. Information about individual student performance on tests has little use, other than for reporting to funding sources. It should be examined in the context of all of the other indicators of progress presented in the rest of this report.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Literacy Volunteers of New York City's instructional program is a dynamic response to the needs and interests of adults with very low literacy skills. Students work together in groups with one or two tutors, helping each other learn to read and write as they slowly peel off layers of negative feelings about themselves and their potential. Many of the problems experienced by the program relate to ways in which it is experimenting with practices that are new to the United States and attempting to develop a model of instruction that is consistent with current research and theory; there are few models of good student-centered literacy education programs in the United States to which it can turn for assistance.

In this report we have provided detailed descriptions of students' perceptions about the extent to which they are learning, and the processes through which this learning is accomplished. In this chapter we return to the basic research question and its three parts to formulate overall conclusions and to provide a context for recommendations. A final section presents our recommendations, including those for an in-house assessment and program evaluation process.

CONCLUSIONS

This section is divided into sections that correspond to the research focus:

What is the impact of participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City for students':

1) literacy skills development;

2) self-concept, attitudes and beliefs related to literacy development; and

3) involvement in literacy tasks outside the program.

Students' Literacy Skills Development

Students' literacy skills are developing through their participation in LVNYC. They discuss numerous ways in which their literacy practices are changing as a result of their new abilities. The range of indicators of skill development that inform this conclusion is important; they include students' testimony, the perspectives of members of some students' inner social networks (parents, siblings, children, friends), judgments of tutors and Center Directors, standardized test score data, and writing samples over time. We have been able to compare across all of these indicators for the students who agreed to participate as case studies; the comparison is informative.

For Ms. Lopez, improvement in reading and writing means concrete tasks she can do that she couldn't do before, such as writing checks, reading and writing more things and doing them more independently, talking about things she is reading, performing literacy tasks on her job more independently, helping her friends and neighbors with their literacy skills, and helping her children with their school work. Improvement in reading and writing means changes in how Ms. Lopez feels about herself and how she relates to her children and husband. Ms. Lopez's husband and two of her children also were interviewed and they strongly corroborated her assessment.

Ms. Lopez says that her enjoyment of writing has increased enormously; she used to hate it and now she cannot write fast enough to get all of her ideas down. This is supported by examination of her writing samples. Ms. Lopez's writing score improved 13 points in the first seven months she was in the program. Improvements were noted across all the areas of writing. Ms. Lopez entered the program testing above the fourth grade level on her reading test. She jokes about the ruses she uses to get out of taking the test at the appropriate intervals; she has been successful, since there are no second test scores for her, although she has been in the program for more than seven months, which is well beyond the 50 hour interval.

Mr. Delisi assesses his skills improvement by looking at concrete tasks also; he talks a lot about how much he enjoys writing stories. He also says he is filling in applications, reading books, using dictionaries, planning a vacation, reading to his sister's children, communicating more easily in general, speaking to groups in the program, and learning how to type from a book. In the six-month interval between Mr. Delisi's writing samples, there has been an eight-point improvement. He showed improvement particularly in the areas of content and organization for meaning and vocabulary. Mr. Delisi entered the program testing above the fourth grade level; he has been in the program seven months and has no second test scores either.

Mr. Paynter talks about how his relationships have changed, particularly with his brother and his mother; he is not scared to take public transportation any more and he lists many daily life tasks that he is doing for the first time, including getting a telephone and managing the bill, buying clothes and groceries on his own, and paying some of the household bills. Mr. Paynter felt that he was making good progress in reading in his first group assignment, but feels that he is not continuing to make progress now. Indeed, his last reading test score was a month below his grade equivalent entry level of first grade, sixth month. Mr. Paynter is a prolific writer and has been published by LVNYC. He turned in 22 writing samples for the evaluation and showed a 13 point improvement in two samples over an 18 month interval.

Students realize the tests provide information about their "level" in order to get into the program and that grade levels have something to do with leaving the program. Other than that, they do not consider the tests relevant or useful to letting them know how they are doing in the program. Students do not use test scores to inform themselves of their own improvement in reading or writing. This is probably due in part to not getting any feedback about how they do on the tests, but it also reflects the philosophy of LVNYC and the program's approach to instruction. Students can talk about ways they are or are not improving as indicated by things they can and cannot do or by the amount of reading and writing they do. As students become more aware of themselves as learners, they are able to assess changes in their skills. Students can compare themselves to other students and make comparisons with what they have been exposed to in other programs.

Students also describe changes in the way they relate to people relative to how they judge themselves to be doing in reading and writing. They generally report positive changes. They can be more helpful to others or more independent of others by using their skills.

We learn from the students participating in this study that they are engaged in literacy practices in which the subskills and tasks are embedded in social relationships which occur in a variety of situations. Their concern is being able to function in those situations in new ways; the subskills and tasks measured by the standardized tests do not indicate the extent to which students are able to change their literacy practices.

The meaning of the test scores is ambiguous as well; for example, we do not know if Mr. Paynter's negative gain score over this period reflects simple measurement error or regression, actual skills loss, skills gain that is reflected in more careful performance on a smaller number of items in the time allowed for the test, loss of interest due to being transferred to a group and tutor that he does not like, use of an invalid test, or simply that he was having a bad day when he was taking the test.

The two measurement tools, standardized tests and writing samples, seem to indicate that students are learning, that they are developing in writing more than in reading, but that there is not a linear relationship between how much they are learning (as measured by these instruments) and how much time they spend in the program. Students appear to continue to learn over time, but the rate of learning slows for students who have been in the program more than two years. In addition, students feel that learning slows when tutors and groups change; sometimes it resumes, but not always.

In addition to improvement in skill levels, we also see movement from a text-based to a knowledge-based view of reading and writing. This appears to be directly connected to LVNYC's approach to reading and writing instruction. Students whose skills are still at the lowest levels remain primarily oriented to letters, sounds and words, but as they embrace the program's approaches to reading and writing processes, they begin to change. Students at higher skills levels embrace the movement more fully.

Student progress is systematically assessed through the standardized tests; there is no system in place that takes into account the broad range of indicators and inputs about learning that are included in this report. Tutors could often point to changes in skills that were manifested in students' writing and reading (i.e., improvement in sentence structure or word recognition), but were unaware of many of the ways in which those skills were being embedded in new literacy practices in students' lives. In a couple of instances this means that tutors thought students were not making progress because they could see no indicators of change in students' performance on tasks in the classroom; however, students reported rich changes in how they were using their skills outside of the classroom.

Self-concept, Attitudes and Beliefs

Students experience positive change in attitudes and beliefs in a number of areas. They see literate persons in a more realistic light; their willingness to take risks with new literacy practices is increased; their enjoyment of literacy is greatly enhanced; and their attitudes about literacy, teaching and learning have become more oriented to the role of prior knowledge and experience. Students do not seem to be placing literacy in a larger sociopolitical perspective, however; their attitudes and beliefs remain oriented to fitting into the mainstream society and to individual social mobility.

Our finding that students experience important and major changes in their feelings about themselves and their ability to learn is consistent with impact studies of other programs (see Darkenwald and Valentine, 1984, for a discussion of other studies as well as their own findings). This present study is particularly valuable because students allow us insight into the relationship between skill development and changes in self-esteem; with notable exceptions (e.g., Fingeret, 1984), this relationship usually remains obscured in research.

Many authors use the terms self-concept and self-esteem interchangeably; it is useful to differentiate them, however. Sanford and Donovan (1984; cited in Foster, 1989) describe self-concept as someone's overall set of beliefs and images about her or himself. Self-esteem has to do with the kind of value placed on those images. It can be negative in relation to some images and positive in relation to others, contributing to an overall negative or positive judgement about oneself. In this way we can understand that some adults think of themselves as quite skilled in some areas while having low self-esteem in relation to schooling or literacy (Foster, 1989). Self-concept and self-esteem are socially developed; that is, they are developed as a result of the relationship between an individual and the social world. They are not attributes that are present at birth and they are dynamic, changing as persons mature, learn, and have new experiences in new situations.

The inability to read and write well is neither good nor bad in its own right; it assumes a value in specific cultural contexts. In the dominant culture of the United

States, this is a characteristic that is highly stigmatizing, giving rise to a profound sense of shame that, in turn, has an impact on self-esteem and behavior. As students' skills develop through their participation in LVNYC, their image of themselves moves closer to their ideal and their self-esteem increases. In addition, the program fosters development of students' self-esteem in other areas (e.g., their ability to learn, in general; their ability to relate well to others, including college-educated volunteers and staff members; their ability to help others, as seen in their interaction in their groups; their ability to write pieces that others find worthy of publishing, etc.). As a result, the negative feelings students have about their specific skills may have a smaller impact on their general self-esteem. From being the major criteria on which their self-esteem in relation to literacy is based, skill limitations become only one of many contributors. In addition, basic self-concept begins to change as adults begin to view themselves as writers and readers. LVNYC's students describe all of these changes.

A final level of change occurs when adults begin to transform the underlying basis on which judgments of esteem are calculated. This would involve students moving from self-blame to an analysis that includes examination of the social structures that contributed to students' difficulties with schooling during their childhoods. We see this kind of change in LVNYC students to a very limited extent. Atkin, Day, Shore and Simon (1990) provide numerous concrete examples of what it looks like to incorporate this kind of critical analysis into group instruction. They have piloted a model in which a counselor is in the classroom, with the teacher; they explain: "The greatest internal barrier to learning and empowerment is the sense of powerlessness and feeling of self-blame. To address these issues requires the restructuring of meaning perspectives and habits of expectation by giving students the information and skills necessary to think and act critically" (p. 11). Their model emphasizes helping students to understand the role of structural inequality, racism, sexism, and classism; "this was done, in and out of the classroom, through the process of validation of feelings, exposure of social myths, reframing experiences and helping students to act to gain greater control in and out of the classroom. Addressing issues of self-blame is a key factor in empowerment" (Atkin, et al, 1990, p. 46). Shor (1987) provides additional examples of what this kind of education looks like.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City addresses these issues indirectly by validating students' feelings and helping them to gain more control over some aspects of their lives. In addition, personal writing provides a means for students to reflect on their lives and feelings; for some students, this means that they begin to develop more complex perspectives that may support changes in judgments about self-esteem and self-concept over time.

On the other hand, the mixed messages students receive about their roles and authority may undermine their self-esteem or interfere with the development of a more positive self-concept. Literacy Volunteers of New York City does not appear to have clarity about what is meant by leadership or leadership development. The structures are in place without the processes and mechanisms to support them; the Student Committee exists, for example, but the range of its functions and the rules for its operation are not defined. As a result, students receive mixed messages about their rights, authority, and power which can lead to a variety of problems. It interferes with creating the kind of safe, predictable and responsive situation in which students can transform their terror and shame. The program also is not clear about the purposes of leadership development; for example, is it aimed at literacy skill development, enhancing other kinds of skills such as public speaking, increasing the extent to which students apply their literacy skills in new situations, or fostering programmatic or social change?

Impact on Life Outside

There are extensive changes in students' participation in literacy practices in their lives outside the program; since practices are social, these shifts imply changes in relationships as well as new tasks being accomplished. The most extensive changes are to public literacy practices in private situations outside the program, and in private literacy practices in private situations inside the program.We reproduce Figure 3 in this chapter to help structure this discussion.

Impacts of Program Participation

(Specific instances are intended only to be explanatory, not inclusive)

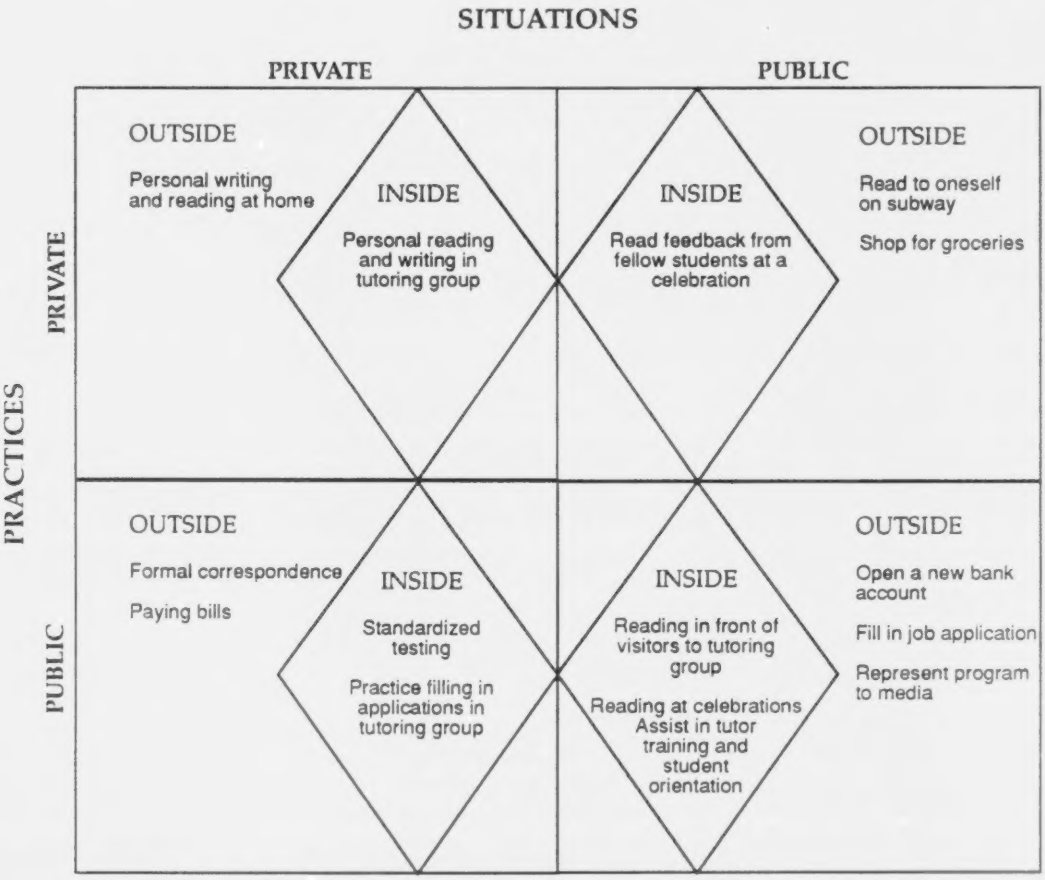

SITUATIONS
PRIVATE
PUBLIC
PRACTICES
PRIVATE
PUBLIC
OUTSIDE
Personal writing and reading at home
INSIDE
Personal reading and writing in tutoring group
INSIDE
Read feedback from fellow students at a celebration
OUTSIDE
Read to oneself on subway
Shop for groceries
OUTSIDE
Formal correspondence
Paying bills
INSIDE
Standardized testing
Practice filling in applications in tutoring group
INSIDE
Reading in front of visitors to tutoring group
Reading at celebrations
Assist in tutor training and student orientation
OUTSIDE
Open a new bank account
Fill in job application
Represent program to media

Figure 3

All of the students with whom we spoke describe some changes; the movement stops or is severely slowed at the point that the situation changes from being inside the program to outside the program, or from private to public. For example, students may feel comfortable using new skills and learning when they are in their tutoring groups. When a visitor comes to the group, it is transformed, for some students, from a private to a public situation. Stress and fear increase, interfering with these students' learning and performance. Similarly, students may confidently fill out application forms in class but have terrible difficulty when facing a prospective employer; the situation moves from inside to outside which changes the practice even through the specific task (filling in the application) remains constant.

When students do not use their skills, or do not feel that they have access to their skills (i.e., performance anxiety), this reflects the power of shame. Students remain terrified of the negative judgment of others. Even when students discuss important and concrete positive changes in their skills, their self-concept, their self-esteem, and their practices, they regularly accompany that by saying that they still have not told many of their friends, family members, employers and coworkers about their skills limitations and their participation in school. The challenge for literacy programs is to help students move across these boundaries, taking their skills into public situations outside the program.

Conclusion

The students who participated in this study have helped us understand some very fundamental things about literacy as they taught us about how increasing literacy skills has had an impact on their lives. Lytle and Wolfe's (1989) discussion of the different definitions of literacy -- as skills, tasks, practices, and critical reflection and action is useful here. The students in this present study show us that they develop literacy skills inside the program. Students apply their skills to tasks they bring to class (e.g., applications to fill out, voter registration cards to read). In class they learn about these tasks as social practices; they also learn about literacy practices as they observe literate people around them, inside and outside the program. Tasks require skill development; practices are tasks embedded in the social environment. Critical reflection assumes a particular stance on the relationship between the social environment and literacy practices. Programs can work with students on any of these levels. Literacy Volunteers of New York City appears to help students with literacy as skills, tasks and, to some extent, as practices.

The biggest challenge for many students appears to be getting beyond the barriers of shame that undermine developing new interpersonal relationships and more fully integrating skills into practices. This may be facilitated by incorporating into instruction more of an emphasis on literacy as critical reflection; this will help students transform their self-blame as they develop an appreciation of the social factors that contributed to their literacy problems as well as to the stigma attached to illiteracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are divided into three major sections: 1) the provision of services; 2) the organization of services; and 3) ongoing assessment, evaluation and program development. These sections are inter-related; changes in internal evaluation procedures, for example, will have an impact on how tutors are trained and how the instructional program is organized, for example.

Our general recommendation is that Literacy Volunteers of New York City develop a process through which the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report can be shared with members of all of the groups that have a stake in the program, including the students, staff, tutors, and board members. Then these groups must be involved in creating their response, working together within the parameters set by the board and staff. The issues raised in this report are consistent with the issues that the staff has been discussing; this was affirmed by the Executive Director and the Education Director when they reviewed an earlier draft of this report.

The Provision of Services

The findings and conclusions from this evaluation study support the ways that Literacy Volunteers of New York City organizes and provides services; students are learning in ways that are consistent with their goals. At the same time, however, a number of issues emerged from this study that suggest that the program may want to explore some changes in this area.

1. Tutor training. Students consistently mention the negative effects of tutor turnover; efforts should be made to **1) develop an understanding of why tutors leave; 2) establish systems for tutor support that will decrease attrition and enhance the effectiveness of instruction; 3) help students deal with tutor turnover**. Students experience problems when their tutors change because they are wrenched from a relationship that has become important in their lives. They describe the dual problems of feeling out of control as well as taking the chance of getting a new tutor who is inexperienced and, perhaps, less effective. Students will benefit from increased predictability which could come from decreasing tutor attrition as well as **developing a program policy addressing students' rights in relation to tutor changes that are imposed by Center Directors.**

Inexperienced tutors need the best training and ongoing support possible. Tutors presently participate in extensive training that includes both pre-service and apprenticeship approaches. It appears to be effective in many areas, as evidenced by the consistency with which writing is taught and tutoring sessions are structured, on the whole. However, tutors seem to have a tendency to polarize some situations, such as silent vs. oral reading or teaching subskills. This is to be expected of persons who have minimal training and who have not yet experienced tutoring on their own during their training sessions. They need assistance learning to develop a more flexible, student-centered, complex model of literacy and literacy education that is philosophically grounded. They also need help developing a model of themselves as creators of knowledge about the literacy education process, and regular opportunities to share their questions and issues with each other. In addition, tutors are struggling with a nontraditional model of the relationship between tutors and students, and their prior experience usually is not a good guide. They tend to view themselves as responsible for solving students' problems rather than helping students to work together to address their problems.

We find that writing instruction is very effective, and publishing is important to students. At the same time, the writing samples we examined were overwhelmingly of personal narratives. These are important, but students need to be encouraged to move into other types of writing as well. Tutors need help learning about teaching writing and responding constructively to students' writing efforts.

Tutors need ongoing, systematic assistance. Once they move into their tutoring assignments, that assistance should be based in their Centers. Right now tutors have regular meetings in some Centers that appear to function primarily as support groups. **We recommend that Literacy Volunteers of New York City develops a system for regular in-service staff development** that will support tutors' skill development and, we hope, reinforce their commitment and their staying power as well.

2. Termination of Instruction. Students in the Transition Group and those who have graduated from the program consistently talk about having difficulty finding new programs that they enjoy and find effective. Given the research on levels of

literacy development, we recommend that LVNYC **re-examine the decision to terminate instruction at a point when students are in transition from a text-based to a knowledge-based model of reading.** In the language presently used in the program, this translates into exploring moving from a limit of fifth grade level reading ability to seventh or eighth.

We understand that there is very little research in this area, and that tutors do not seem to be able to provide effective instruction beyond this level at LVNYC; students may talk about feeling pushed out of the program, but they also talk about getting bored and knowing that it is time to leave. A decision to provide instruction at higher levels of reading ability, therefore, will also involve developing additional training and, perhaps, a new instructional structure within the program for students at more advanced levels. We do not recommend that the program consider providing instruction at the GED level or higher.

3. Cultural Diversity. Analysis of the impact of the extreme differences between the cultural and demographic characteristics of the students, tutors and staff of Literacy Volunteers of New York City was outside the scope of this study. However, the gap is so pronounced that we recommend that **aggressive steps be taken to increase the cultural diversity of staff and volunteers**. This means initiating a process that includes students, staff, volunteers, board members and representatives of the communities from which greater representation is sought. Engaging in this process openly and genuinely is an important step towards responding to this recommendation. In addition, we recommend that **education in cross-cultural communication be included as part of tutor training** as soon as possible, and that tutors be provided with assistance about how to recognize, understand and provide leadership for dealing with issues of race, culture, gender, dialect, and class differences that arise in their tutoring groups and in the larger program.

4. Counseling. Students experience a distinct break between their ability to engage in literacy practices inside and outside of the program. There are some things that the program does to help minimize the separation. For example, students can bring tasks from the outside into their tutoring groups for help, and they can invite persons from the outside to events such as the yearly Celebration. Using real-world materials such as application forms for instructional materials helps as well. But the difference between tasks and practices has to do with the social context. Sitting at a table in a corporate cafeteria filling in applications with assistance from one's peers is not the same as standing at a counter in an impersonal personnel office, struggling with an application under the scrutiny of a watchful clerk (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rogoff, Gauvain, & Ellis, 1984).

Students' anxiety can be alleviated somewhat if they overpractice some skills in class, so that they become more internalized and automatic. They also can be taught simple relaxation exercises and constructive ways of responding to negative self-talk. Students' can be encouraged to discharge their shame and terror, allowing more positive emotions to develop. These kinds of changes might best be facilitated through a partnership between tutors and counselors.

Students are dealing with a wide variety of difficult problems in their lives; some students come to the program as part of a larger process of change while others are taking their first tentative steps into new possibilities. A number of students with whom we spoke talked about the positive impact counseling has had on their lives in the last few years. Atkin, Day, Shore & Simon (1990) provide a persuasive argument for the role of counseling in conjunction with instruction to help students transform their feelings of self-blame and deal with other issues in their lives. **We recommend that Literacy Volunteers of New York City develop a plan for providing counseling services to students in a variety of formats.** This could include integrating counseling with instruction, similar to Atkin et al's model, as well providing counseling for students in private offices at Centers and at other locations. A peer counseling program could be developed in which students learn to help each other. Counselors also can be available as a resource to help tutors better understand the dynamics of their experience and develop skills to work with students more effectively.

5. Moving from Inside to Outside. In addition, we recommend that LVNYC staff and tutors work with students to **develop ways that the program can support students' use of their skills in situations that are increasingly public and outside the program**. This may entail bringing relationships from inside the program to outside. For example, it might help if students plan to go together to places such as personnel offices, motor vehicles offices, banks or grocery stores. Although this is difficult to plan because of competing responsibilities, it is worth exploring. Students may be able to identify a number of situations in which they would find it helpful and supportive -- reducing anxiety -- if they were accompanied by classmates. Students also may be able to help tutors better reproduce some of the peripheral features of practices that are anxiety-producing on the outside, such as time limits and noise.

The Organization of Services

Services are provided through Centers that all relate to a central office in Manhattan. This organizational structure is in transition, with a Coordinator of Center Directors working as their advocate and supervisor in the central office and the Center Directors developing more autonomy and power. This shift appears to be serving the program well; all Centers share a common philosophy and basic approach to instruction while, at the same time, each Center has a distinct personality that reflects the staffing, the location, the time of day, the resources available and the students.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City has many of the characteristics of a loosely coupled system (Weick, 1976). This means that the different parts of the system are responsive to each other, but one part can "dissolve" without harming the system as a whole. In other words, Centers can come and go in different locations and with different degrees of success without necessarily harming the program overall. Weick suggests that loosely coupled systems allow adaptation of the individual parts to their particular situations and allow for more self-determination by each part of the system.

As LVNYC continues to develop this model, it is important to pay attention to the context of power relationships within which instruction is provided. Many students talk about feeling that they have no control over changes in groups and tutors and certainly not over policy. Student representation appears to function primarily to carry information. We recommend that LVNYC **explore ways of minimizing the unpredictability of group change and involving students more centrally in decisions about instructional groups and tutor assignments.**

Literacy Volunteers of New York City is committed to leadership development, but must **involve the students, staff, tutors and board in deciding what is a legitimate role for students and planning to act on that decision**. This implies that the staff must decide which policies and practices are fixed and which are open to change. Then they should develop a statement about the processes and mechanisms of accountability for changing those things.

Clarification of students' roles and support for their performance should be part of a larger staff development program. Job descriptions should be developed or clarified for the entire staff, including the students on staff, so that it is clear whether the comments made about former students' performance as staff members reflect classism and racism or portray real inadequacies in their performance. Training should be designed and provided that assists all staff members to enhance their performance in relation to their job descriptions. In addition, leadership development has to be integrated throughout the organization, rather than being viewed as an activity or service provided to one particular group of persons.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City should engage members of the stakeholders' communities in developing a student handbook that includes explanations of students' rights and processes for exercising those rights. It should emphasize the importance of putting questions or problems in writing and working through formal mechanisms. For example, students could consult the handbook for information about what to do if they are unhappy with their tutors, and what response they have a right to expect from program staff. A written system would not only address many of the problems students experience with the present system of informal authority; it also would reinforce literacy practices. A staff ombudsperson could mediate in situations in which students feel they have not received the appropriate response.

Ongoing Assessment, Evaluation and Program Development

One of the explicit tasks of this present evaluation study was to generate recommendations for an ongoing internal evaluation and assessment process. We provide those in this section. Program evaluation is complex, involving assessment of a number of aspects of program operation, including learner skills development; teacher roles and development; staff roles and development; the relationships among the students, staff and teachers; general organizational internal communication and functioning; the relationship between the organization and the board; and the relationship between an organization and its stakeholder communities. An evaluation study will choose to focus on one or some of these aspects.

Learner progress provides one measure of program evaluation. It does not reflect the totality of program operation, but it is central since the program's overarching goals have to do with providing direct services to the student community. In this section we respond to the program's request for recommendations about developing an ongoing internal system for assessing learner progress and aggregating that information to respond to one aspect of program evaluation.

Lytle and Wolfe (1990) explain the concept and purpose of assessment:

> Learner assessment can broadly be defined as a process of collecting and analyzing data provided by learners in order to make judgments about the literacy accomplishments of individuals or groups.... What it hopes to accomplish is wide-ranging and complex: the provision of information useful to teachers in planning instruction, to learners in determining their own progress towards particular goals, to program managers and staff in evaluating their instructional impact on learners' lives, and to funders in ascertaining a degree of program accountability and success. (p. 41)

Traditional assessment has relied upon standardized tests; problems with these instruments are described in previous chapters. Most salient here is that they do not reflect the goals of instruction and do not involve learners in the process of identifying, gathering and analyzing the information to be assessed.

Experts agree (see, for example, Farr and Carey, 1986; Lytle and Wolfe, 1989; Sticht, 1990) that there should be congruence between learner assessment and instruction. They should be philosophically consistent and should reflect the same definitions of literacy and the purposes of literacy programs. LVNYC maintains a student-centered philosophy in which students come to expect to play those kinds of roles in relation to instruction. And we can see from this present report that students are very capable of reflecting on their learning and growth and directing their efforts towards goals that they have decided are important in their lives. Therefore, assessment should be consistent with the program's instructional philosophy and approach.

Lytle and Wolfe (1989) describe an alternative to the traditional assessment models that is called participatory assessment. They describe it as, "a process rather than a tool or set of tools, distinguished from other assessment approaches by its view of literacy and literacy education and by its emphasis on the active participation of both adult learners and program staff" (p. 51). They continue: "Participatory assessment, then, necessitates a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts, and contexts of assessment, as well as in judging its outcomes" (p. 52). This is a view of assessment that is consistent with understanding that literacy practices and goals vary from student to student. Although everyone will be involved in the assessment process, the information gathered will vary according to the adults who are involved.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City has been involved for the past year in developing an alternative assessment system that has many of the characteristics of participatory assessment. We recommend that LVNYC continue working in that direction. At the same time, however, we find great ambivalence about assessment and record keeping among staff, tutors and students. In our experience, that kind of ambivalence tends to reflect a lack of clarity about the relationship between assessment and the work of the program.

Therefore, our first recommendation is that the program should **develop a process to involve all of the major stakeholders (students, volunteers, staff, funding sources and board) in designing an evaluation system that is directly connected to the concerns and ongoing work of each of these groups.** The main questions this group will examine include:

1. *Identify stakeholders and purposes.* The first step is to clarify whose purpose(s) is to be served through assessment and evaluation procedures. Then, the purposes for assessment should be clearly identified in relation to each of those stakeholders. Members of each group should think carefully about what information would help them in their roles, and what kinds of processes feel compatible with the program's philosophy and mode of operating now.

2. *Clarify who and what are being evaluated.* Next, it is important to decide if LVNYC is going to assess outcomes or processes. A participatory assessment model encourages examining processes as well as outcomes to develop an ongoing understanding of what and how someone is learning. LVNYC also has to identify the extent to which they want to include information from sources other than students and tutors.
3. *Identify what resources presently exist and what information will be collected, by whom and how.* Resources such as the Community Development Agency can provide assistance collecting and organizing information. Someone at LVNYC must be responsible for gathering, managing, analyzing, and interpreting the information, however.
4. *Decide how the information will be used, and by whom.* The program must decide who will be involved in making decisions (how information is shared), implementing decisions based on the information, and evaluating the results of the decisions.

Furthermore, we recommend that a staff person in the central office have the specific responsibility for monitoring the development of this system against a time line.

In addition, we offer the following **specific recommendations about record keeping**, based on a participatory assessment model and with the understanding that these recommendations are all open to review and revision through the process outlined above. There are three levels of record keeping: (1) Center, (2) Personal, and (3) Program.

1. Centers: In the Center we recommend development of a portfolio system based on portfolio models currently being used in public schools and some adult literacy programs (see Soifer, et al, 1990, and ALBSU, n.d., for discussions of their use in adult programs). Portfolios are folders -- often big, expandable cardboard folders -- that are kept in a central place in each Center. Students, tutors and Center Directors would all have access to the portfolios and would contribute to them as well. Students and tutors would have regularly scheduled times to sit down and assess students' progress, using the portfolio as a source of information. If students transfer to other Centers, their portfolios would be transferred as well. When students leave the program, attendance information and a summary of the student's performance information will be transferred to the central office; the portfolio is the student's property.

Valencia (1990, p. 338), writing from the perspective of public schools, asserts that there are four basic principles for a portfolio:

1. The tasks reflected or included in the portfolio should be "authentic," reflecting students' goals and the tasks and practices in which students engage;
2. The portfolio should be integrated into instruction and updated continually; it should reflect students' developmental process as well as products;
3. There should be a sampling of a wide range of processes, activities, practices, and tasks to correspond to the variety of ways in which literacy skills are used;
4. Students and teachers should work together developing and assessing the portfolio.

She provides examples of the kinds of materials that can be included (p. 339):

a) samples of the student's work selected by the teacher of the student,

b) the teacher's observational notes,

c) the student's own periodic self-evaluations, and

d) progress notes contributed by the student and teacher collaboratively.

She continues: "[It also might include] written responses to reading, reading logs, selected daily work, pieces of writing at various stages of completion, classroom tests, checklists, unit projects, audio or video tapes" (p. 339).

Wolf (1989), also writing from the perspective of public schools, reinforces the importance of including samples of work in development, such as early and later drafts of writing: "A biography of a work reveals the geology of different moments that underlies the production of any major project" (p. 36). Wolf admits that portfolio assessment is not an easy route to take:

> Portfolios are messy. They demand intimate and often frighteningly subjective talk with students. Portfolios are work. Teachers who ask students to read their own progress in the "footprints" of their works have to coax and bicker with individuals who are used to being assessed. Halfway through the semester, at least a half dozen recalcitrants will lose every paper or sketch or tape they have ever owned. More important, teachers have to struggle to read and make sense of whole works and patterns of growth. Hence, hard questions arise: "Why bother? What comes out of portfolio-based assessment?" The immediate answer lies in integrity and the validity of the information we gain about how and what students learn. But that's far from all. (p. 37)

Wolf goes on to list the other outcomes of working with portfolios: enhancing student responsibility, enlarging students' and teachers' views of what is being learned, providing systematic opportunities for a process orientation and a developmental perspective on learning and teaching.

We recommend that the group developing the assessment examine all of the types of information described above, as well as additional information they identify. But we recommend that portfolios in Literacy Volunteers of New York City contain no less than:

1. *Information on student participation* in the program, including student attendance, leaves of absence, participation in groups other than reading/writing instruction, participation as representative to student committee, participation at center/program wide events. Some of this information will be transferred on a regular basis to the central office for reporting purposes.

2. *Writing samples* including a copy of the unedited, first draft writing sample from PEP, samples of additional works-in-progress, and published work. Each copy of an unedited sample should have a cover sheet with the following information on it:

Student Name, Center, Date and Writing Situation, e.g. free writing, response to reading/discussion, tutor generated topic, etc. Tutors should use a writing analysis rubric we provide (or an adaptation) to calculate a total score and analyze a student's strengths and weaknesses.

3. *Reading Measures* which include notes on students' reading a series of leveled passages developed by the program (see recommendation below). The Reading Strategies interview questions developed by Jean Fargo and piloted this year should be transferred to the tutors and students to serve as a guide for conversations assessing students' approaches to reading. The folders should also contain a reading log: a list of materials the student has read, with the date, and a brief description of book and tutor(s)' observations of students' reading.

4. *Progress notes*. Portfolios should be assessed on a regular basis by students and tutors, collaboratively, and a set of notes written by each person that discusses areas of progress and problems. At this time students and tutors also will decide if different information should be included in the portfolio to reflect students' work and learning as completely as possible.

2.Personal Student Folders: Students should be encouraged to keep notebooks or folders in which they keep samples of their writing that represent the process of writing from the first draft to the final typed or published copy so they can see their progress in concrete terms. The student also should have a version of the reading log with space to write comments about the materials they read.

3. Centralized Student Files Records for students should be entered into a computerized data base and kept in a central location which can be updated monthly. These should contain:

1. Demographic information from the intake form
2. Date of Entry into the Program

3. Assessment data (test scores, writing rubric scores)

4. Cumulative hours in the program at time of assessment (for evaluation it is important that the program can produce cumulative hours, across multiple years of involvement.)

5. Program changes for student and dates, including changes in Centers, group assignments, and tutor(s)

6. Transition/graduation date. A staff person in the central office or in the Center should be responsible for following up with graduates and students who have dropped out to determine if they have continued their education and/or reasons for leaving.

7. Leaves of Absence dates

8. Date terminated

This information can be collected on ledger sheets and turned into a central location for monthly updates. Summary updated records, by month, should be kept on number of active students, number of active tutors, and numbers of persons (students and tutors) who left the program. At any time, personnel should be able to access information to determine the present status of any student in LVNYC. The staff should investigate the extent to which CDA may be able to assist in setting up and maintaining this system.

Third, we recommend that the **program develop its own reading instrument** similar to an informal reading inventory that contains a set of leveled reading passages and questions. The passages should be drawn from student reading materials or student writing and administered to each student at entry into the program and at fixed intervals after that. There should be several copies of the passages at each level. The person responsible can be either the tutor or the Center

Director, but the results should be communicated to the tutor and recorded in the student's Center Folder.

Finally, we recommend that **assessment of progress be communicated to the central office**. At yearly intervals the tutors and students are responsible for providing a narrative assessment of progress to their Center Director that includes a review of all of the materials in the portfolio and an overall assessment of the extent to which the student is making progress toward her or his goals. Center Directors are responsible for reviewing this information and forwarding it to the central office together with their overall assessment of patterns they see that are related to their Center's student and tutor population. A Center meeting will be held once a year in which the Center Director, tutors and students will share their general assessments of teaching and learning at the Center.

Someone on the staff in the central office, in cooperation with a committee including students, Center Directors and tutors, will be responsible for developing a yearly report that portrays the patterns found across Centers and students' experiences as well as depicting the aggregate gains according to reading and writing measures. This report will be far more narrative and less quantitative than has been true in the past. It will be shared with all participants in the program, as well as with the board.

To summarize our four major recommendations:

1. A process should be developed to involve all stakeholder groups in designing an evaluation and assessment procedure.
2. Center, personal and central records should be developed. Center records will be based primarily on an alternative assessment model using portfolios.
3. A new reading test should be developed that reflects the program's philosophy and students' skills and backgrounds; it should be combined with the questionnaire presently being developed and administered through a process

that involves the tutor, even if the Center Director actually works with the student in the test situation.

4. A yearly narrative report should be developed that includes aggregate information from the measures as well as qualitative assessments of progress. It will be developed as part of a program-wide process of evaluation and reflection annually, including Center meetings with tutors, students and the Center Director.

The need for assessment and record keeping must be better understood, issues confronted, and ambivalence resolved before any change will be successfully implemented. These recommendations suggest a clear commitment on the part of staff, students, and tutors to engage in systematic data collection and record keeping. Development of an assessment process in which the Center Director plays a central role means that it may be necessary to revise the job description, qualifications and training of Center Directors. Adoption of some form of the process outlined here also implies that the program-level data manager, currently a part-time position, might be upgraded to full-time to provide the leadership this process will require.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NDN APPLICATION

The Criteria and Guidelines for the application process for participating in the National Diffusion Network were reviewed in order to explore the appropriateness of an LVNYC application.

Summary of the Criteria

1. Appropriate Measurement
2. Clearly demonstrated links between program elements and observed outcomes.
3. A standard of comparison
4. Explicit connection between changes observed and the stated purpose(s) of the program
5. Comparison to similar programs

6. Generalizability as measured by stability of results at the "home site" or evidence of replication at new sites.

7. Efficiency as measured by the money, time, and resources that the program requires.

Types of Claims a Program May Make

1. Change in Knowledge and Skills: measurement of learning and the comparison of growth to an appropriate control group or normative standards and evidence that the change is educationally significant

2. Improvements in Attitudes and Behaviors: (of either teachers or students): requires data showing positive change in the target group linked to educationally important goals and evidence the change is large enough to be meaningful

3. Improvements in Instructional Practices and Procedures: documentation of change linked to longer term educationally relevant outcomes, related to efficiency, cost, labor saving, and service

Conclusion and Recommendation

We recommend that LVNYC not pursue an application to the NDN at this time for the following reasons.

- No systematic procedure for record keeping and data collection.
- No standard means for measuring change.
- While the program has a unifying philosophy, each Center is not a replication of the other. It would be difficult to make a claim for replication when the programs at the "home site" are as diverse and autonomous as they are.
- The philosophy of student-centered literacy education practiced by LVNYC puts it inherently at odds with the criteria for being accepted as a National Diffusion Network program. LVNYC's programs are structured to be responsive, dynamic,

and flexible. The language used in the above stated criteria seems foreign to the intent of LVNYC.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this report conveys the excitement and commitment of all of the students, staff, volunteers and board members of Literacy Volunteers of New York City who participated in this project. We asked what is the impact for students who participate in LVNYC? The students tell us in this report that the impact is profound, touching every aspect of their lives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Education Centers of Literacy Volunteers of New York City
Appendix B	Comparison of Demographics by Race, and Age of LVNYC Students and LVNYC Participants in Group Interviews
	Comparison of Demographics by Gender of LVNYC Students and LVNYC Participants in Group Interviews
	Summary of Characteristics of Current Students who Participated in Study
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	Observational Guidelines
Appendix D	Description of Case Study Participants
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Appendix E	Interview Guidelines for Tutor Committee
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Appendix F	Data Management Chart for Interviews and Observations
	Data Management Chart for Case Studies Interviews
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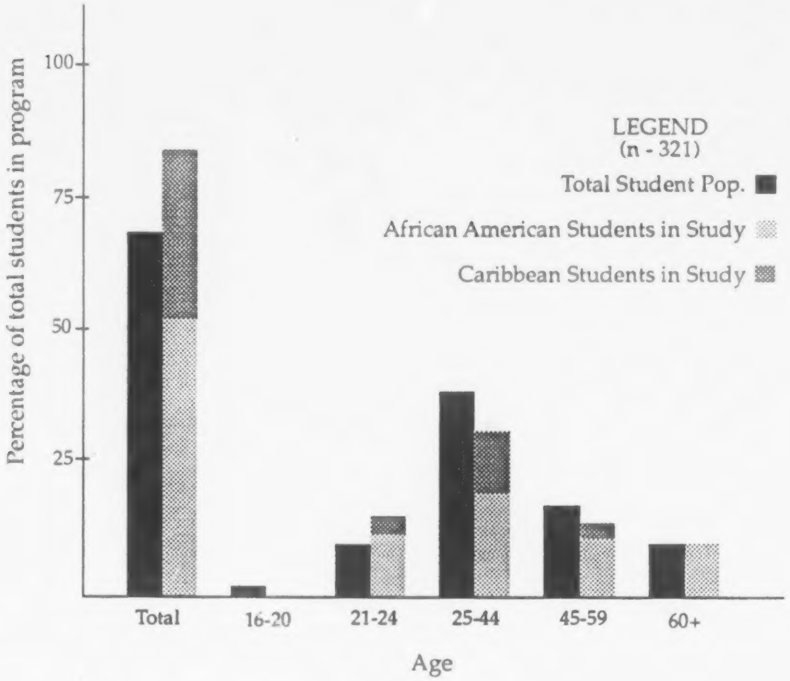
Appendix A

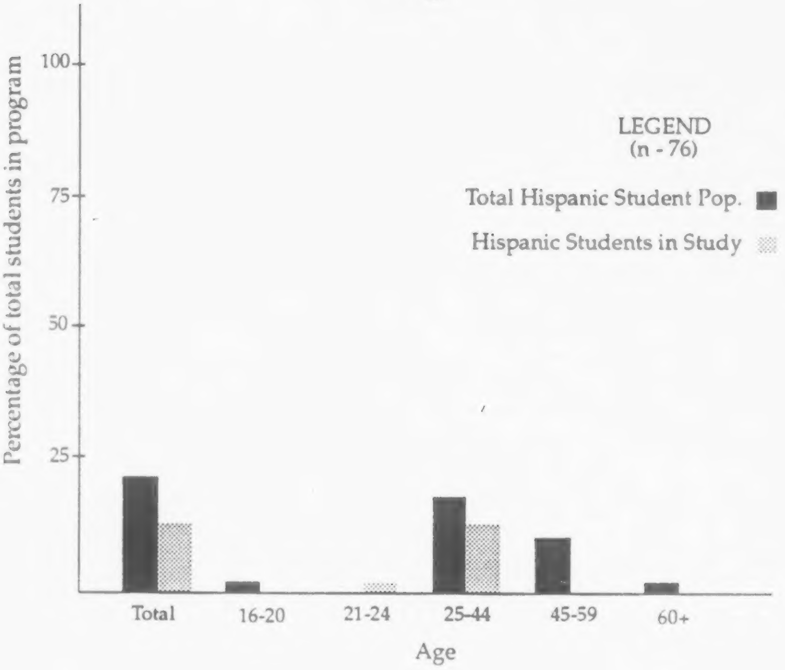
Education Centers of Literacy Volunteers of New York City

Harlem	55 St. Nicholas Ave., SW corner of 113th St. Schedule: Tue. and Fri., 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon
Citibank	135 East 53rd Street, 7th Floor Cafeteria Schedule: Tue. and Thur., 4:00 to 8:00 pm
McGraw-Hill	1221 Ave. of the Americas, Cafeteria Schedule: Mon. and Wed., 4:00 to 8:00 pm
Equitable Life	2 Penn Plaza, 27th Floor, 7th Ave. & 32nd Street Intensive Course Schedule: Tue., Wed., and Thur., 6:00 to 8:00 pm
Brooklyn Day	Lafayette Ave. Presbyterian Church, 85 South Oxford Street at Lafayette Ave. Schedule: Mon. and Thur., 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon
Brooklyn Evening	Lafayette Ave. Presbyterian Church, 85 South Oxford Street at Lafayette Ave. Schedule: Mon. and Wed., 5:00 to 8:00 pm
New York Life	44 East 27th Street, Cafeteria, First Basement Intensive Course Schedule: Mon. and Wed., 4:00 to 8:00 pm, and Tue. 5:00 to 8:00 pm
Paramount Communications	Broadway at Columbus Circle, 40th Floor Schedule: Mon. and Wed., 4:00 to 8:00 pm or Tue. and Thur., 6:00 to 8:00 pm
Colgate-Palmolive	Tutor Training Site 300 Park Ave. at 50th St., 7th Floor Cafeteria Schedule: Mon. and Fri., 5:30 to 8:30 pm and as scheduled
Warner Communications	Pre-Enrollment Program 75 Rockefeller Plaza, Downstairs to Cafeteria Schedule: As announced

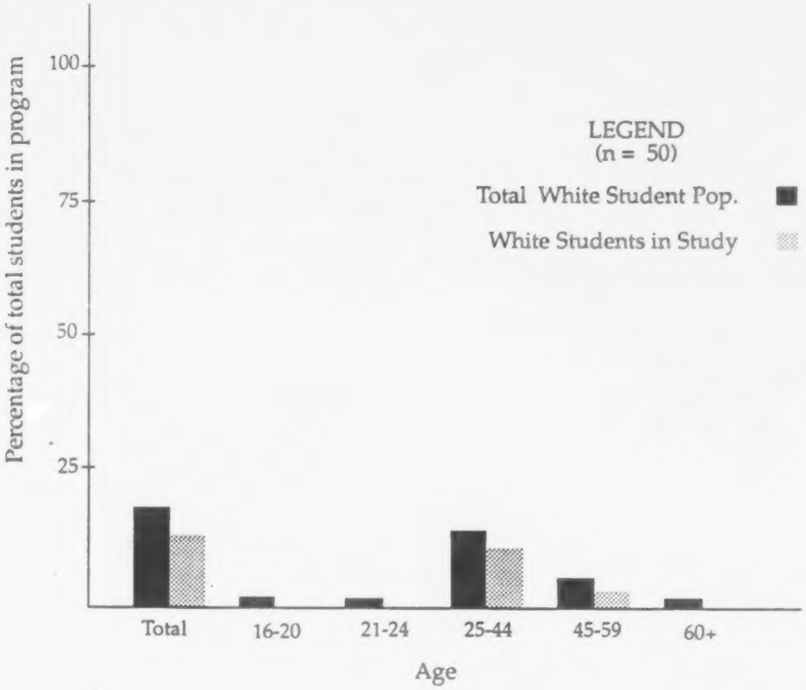
Appendix B

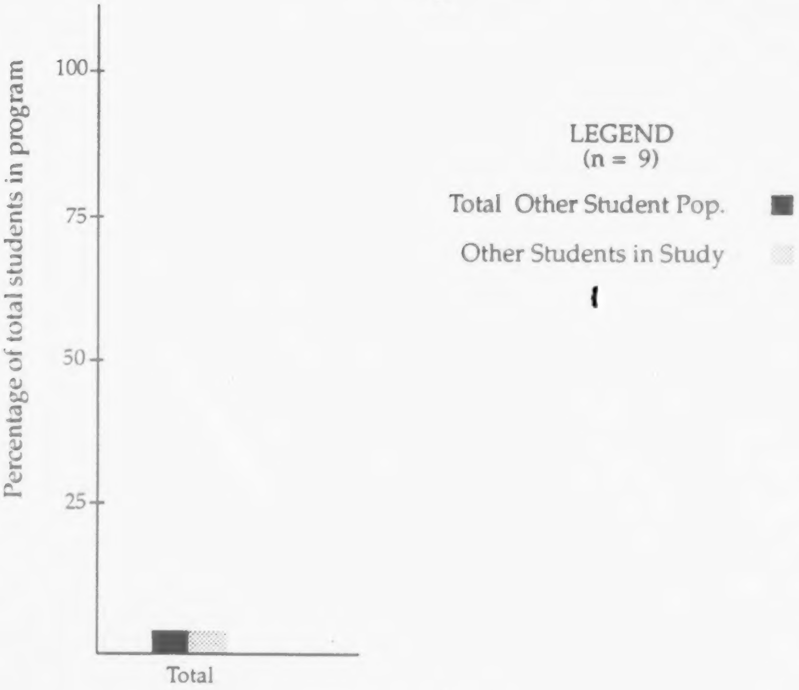
Comparison of Demographics by Race, and Age of LVNYC Students and LVNYC Participants in Group Interviews



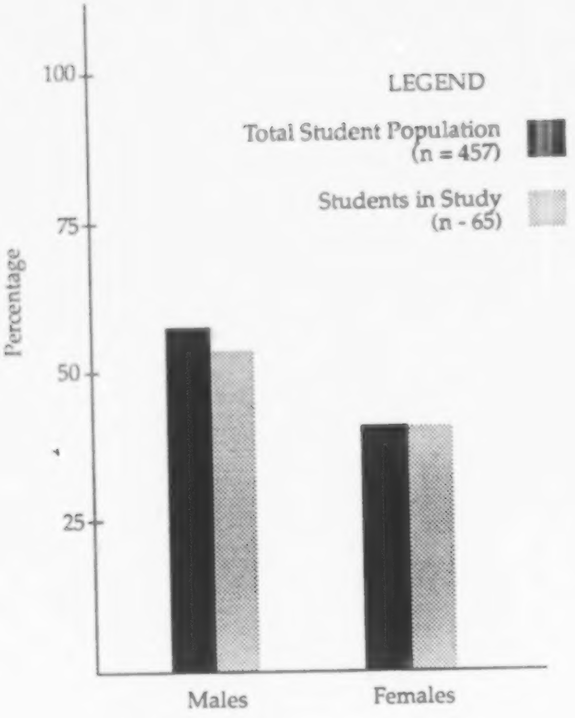


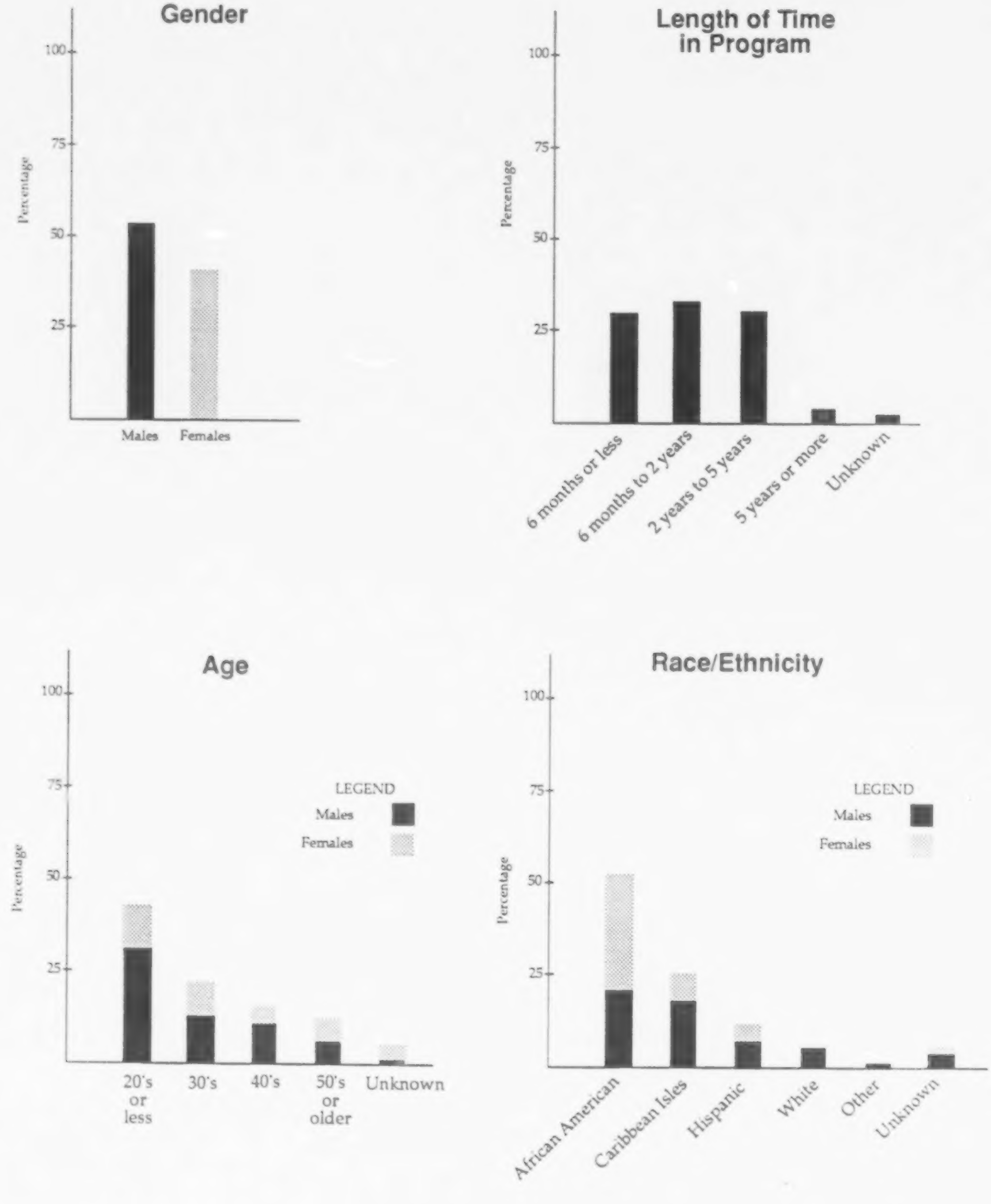
Comparison of Demographics by Race, and Age of LVNYC Students and LVNYC Participants in Group Interviews (continued)





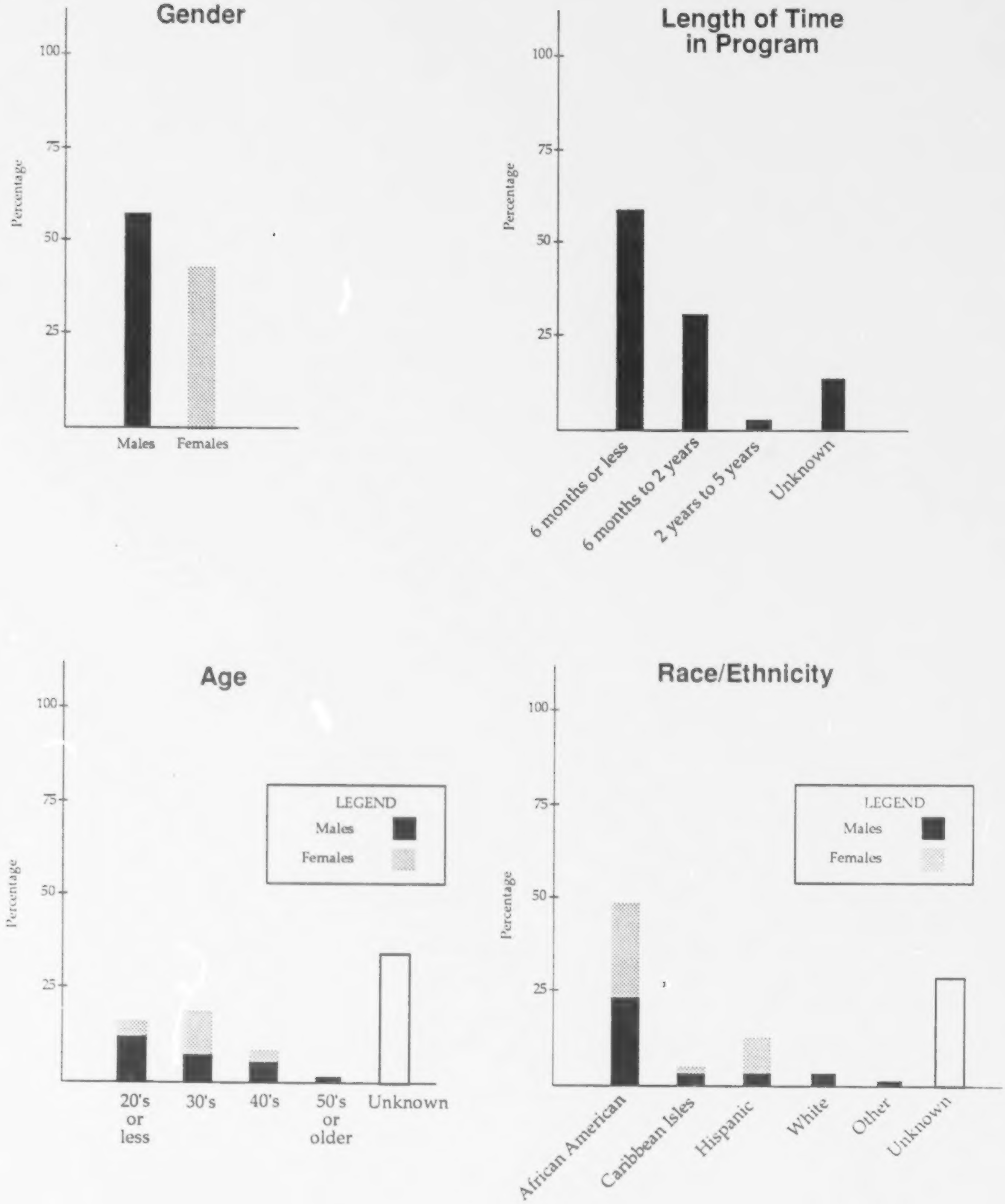
Comparison of Demographics by Gender of LVNYC Students and LVNYC Participants in Group Interviews





Summary of Characteristics of Current Students who Participated in Study (n = 65)

Summary of Characteristics of Students who Left the Program (n = 37)



Appendix C

Interview Guidelines

Focus Group for Students:

In order to answer the evaluation questions, we need to explore the following areas:

1. Student participation and involvement in the program

   The interviewer should begin by introducing herself and talking about the purpose of the interview, which is to learn about the students' experiences in the program, in order to make the program more responsive to their needs. (or words that convey that meaning)

   In order to get each student's name on tape to keep track of who is talking, begin with:

   - Introduce yourself and tell a little about yourself.
   - How did you come to LVNYC? (if they do not tell this during their introduction.)
   - Tell about your experience with LVNYC.
   - Probes: When you first came or first started in this group

2. Changes for students: Based on how students talk about themselves and describe their experiences.

   - Tell about what kinds of things have happened since coming to the program
   - How do you know that things are changing or different for you?
   - What kinds of differences do your family or friends see?

3. We know you've been told we can't talk to everyone in the program and that if people have comments or suggestions, they were to pass them on to the center director. Are there things other students have passed on to you that they want you to tell us?

4. Changes in the program

   - In what ways or how would you make the program different or better?

For Tutors Before and After Group Observations:

Before:

Be sure to tell why you're there and what you're doing. i.e. coming to observe a session and see what the students are doing.

Have the tutors give an overview of what you're going to be looking at.

- What are you going to be trying to do in this session?
- How did you come to decide what you are doing in this session?

After:

- What happened in this session that was particularly telling about different students?
- What things were particularly meaningful or important that you think we should know?
- How was this session different or the same from others? The impact of the observer?

Observational Guidelines

General Comments

We will observe all instructional groups who have been interviewed at least once. Keep in mind the observation takes place before, during, and after the instructional session. Part of the program's impact may be picked up during informal time, so these questions apply to all points during the observation.

It is important that observers engage in conversation with participants where appropriate or ask informal questions in order to clarify the meaning of activities and actions to participants.

You need to get verbatim comments. The language people use is a key to understanding what is important and meaningful to them.

Nonverbal communication is also vital:

Spatial arrangements
Facial expressions
Physical movements
Eye-contact (among students and tutors)
Voice level and tone
Style of dress

Physical setting:

- Describe the physical environment
- Can someone visualize the setting from the description?

Social environment/Relationships:

- What are the characteristics of the group? (number, gender, race, age)
- How do people arrange themselves?
- Who talks to whom?
- Who initiates the interaction?
- Who is involved in making decisions?
  Who initiates decisions? Tutors? Students?
  What kinds of decisions are made?
- How do students interact with each other?
- How do students and tutors interact?
- Who talks? What kinds of things are said?
- What are the non-verbal communications?
- What is the nature of interactions? (formal, friendly, casual,etc)

Roles:

- Who assumes the leadership role?
- What roles do students play?
- What role(s) do(es) the Tutor(s) play?
- Who initiates choices and decisions?
- What kinds of responses are there?

Program activities and Participant behaviors:

- What is happening?
- What are the activities?
  Do participants have labels for activities?
  How does activity begin?
  What is said?
  Who is involved?
  What kinds of behavior/language occur during the activity?
  What is signal that the activity is ended?
- What are the students and tutors doing?
  Questions/Responses
  Directions
  Discussions
  Opinions
  Personal
- What activity(ies) is/are occurring?
  Describe the activities
- What is required of the participants?
- What is the content of the activity(ies)?
- What kinds of literacy materials are available?
  How are materials used in activities?
  How do students and tutors use materials?

Informal/Unplanned time:

- What is going on during "free-time"
- What are participants doing?.....saying?

Appendix D

Description of Case Study Participants

TOTAL	10
Males	6
Females	4*

*one dropped out of the program after the first interview

		# of Students (%)
Race/Ethnicity	*AfricanAmerican*	
	Total:	5 (50%)
	Males:	3
	Females:	2
	Hispanic	
	Total:	3 (30%)
	Males:	1
	Females:	2
	White	
	Total (Male):	1 (10%)
	Caribbean	
	Total (Male):	1 (10%)
Ages	16-24:	2
	25-44:	6
	45-59:	1
	60+:	1
Relationships	Married:	2
	Single:	7
	Widowed:	1
	Have children:	5
Employment Status	Employed:	7
	Retired:	2
	Unemployed:	1
Length of Time in Program	Less than 6 months:	5
	6 mos - 2 years:	2
	3 to 4 years:	2
	4 yrs or more:	1

Case Study Interview Guidelines

1. Talk about your experiences with school.

2. Tell me what growing up was like for you.

3. Experiences in the program

4. Changes you have seen

5. Describe what you do to
    - shop for groceries
    - pay bills
    - (other tasks which require literacy skills)

6. Relationships
    - Who helps you do things that need reading and writing?
    - In what way have your relationships changed since coming to the program?

Appendix E

Interview Guidelines for Tutor Committee

Views of Self as Tutor

What decision led you to becoming a tutor?
How do your experiences now compare with when you began?
What were your earliest experiences like?
How has your participation with the group changed?
What is the most challenging aspect of tutoring?
How do you participate during classes?
What was your image of being a tutor when you began? Now?
How did you come to be on this committee?

Views of Program

How did you come to the group you are currently with?
What do you do when you feel you need help?
What is your sense of what makes a group work well together?
What is it that makes groups different?
Suggestions for making the program better?
Suggestions for tutor training?
Are there differences between how students want to do things and the LVNYC way of doing things?
How do you handle the differences?
Where do the ideas for the kinds of things you do with the group originate?

Views of Students:

How do students let you know what they need?
How do you know what students need?
How can you tell a student is improving?
What kinds of changes do you see?
What is your definition of a good reader or good writer?
How do you define "success" in this program?
What are your expectations for students?
What do you think students are concerned about?
What are your impressions of student participation?
What do you think is useful to students in the program? What could be more useful?

NOTE: These can be collapsed into broader questions. Would like opinions on how and organization.

Interview Protocol for Center Directors

1. Critical Incidents. Talk about something that happened in your Center that was difficult, challenging, sensitive, or embarrassing. How did you handle it?

2. Give some examples of policies emerging that are important in their impact on students. (Examples: such as group stability or oral vs. silent reading) How do you handle changes in policy at your Center?

3. What are your thoughts about the whole idea of evaluating students?

4. Decision making structure: Where do you see your place? in relationship to students, tutors, other staff? How do decisions get made?

5. What are the issues you see the students dealing with?

6. In what ways do you think the program can be improved?

Appendix F

Data Management Chart for Interviews and Observations

Program Site	Interviewer/ Observer	Date(s) Interviewed	Date(s) Observed	Date Transcribed	Date Edited	Date Entered
Paramount I						
Citibank						
Harlem						
Readers Digest						
Brooklyn Eve						
Paramount II						
McGraw-Hill						
New York Life						
Equitable						
Student Committee						
Tutor Committee						
Transition/Groups Graduate						
Tutor Training						
Celebration						
Dropouts						
Center Director						
Staff						

Data Management Chart for Case Studies Interviews

Student Name	Center	Interviewer	Dates	Date Transcribed	Date Edited	Date Entered in File

Appendix G

Scoring Sheet for Writing Rubric

Name ______________________________ Date of Writing ____________________

Title/Topic ______________________________ Program Entry Date ____________________

Number of Words __________ Number of Sentences (defined by periods) ______________

Hand written ________ Edited ________ Typed ________

Content and Organization for Meaning				
Conveys meaningful message	8	6	4	2
Presents details in support of main ideas	8	6	4	2
Shows evidence of planning and organization (beginning, middle, end)	8	6	4	2
Total				
Vocabulary				
Chooses simple words to convey meaning	8	6	4	2
Makes effort to use sophisticated words	8	6	4	2
Total				
Sentence and Paragraph Structure				
Divides ideas into logical sentences	4	3	2	1
Uses simple sentences appropriately	4	3	2	1
Makes effort to develop paragraphs	4	3	2	1
Total				
Mechanics				
Uses appropriate end punctuation	4	3	2	1
Begins sentences with capital letters	4	3	2	1
Spells words correctly	4	3	2	1
Total				
Grand Total				

Scoring Code:

4 - uses consistently, suggests mastery
3 - uses purposefully though inconsistently, suggests some knowledge
2 - uses occasionally, haphazardly, suggests lack of understanding
1 - not present or observed, not able to evaluate